

A  
DEFENCE

OF  
Dramatick Poetry:

BEING A  
REVIEW

OF  
Mr. COLLIER's View

OF THE  
Immorality and Profaneness of  
the STAGE.

---

L O N D O N:  
Printed for *Eliz. Whitlock*, near *Sta-*  
*tioner's Hall.* 1698.







---

---

# PREFACE.

**T**HE Popular Reception of Mr. Collier's celebrated Piece, has built him no small Reputation: But it had been an infinite higher Glory, both to the Book and the Author, had the Argument been taken up in his Pulpit-Reign. Then he would have convinced the World that he put Pen to Paper in the Spirit of Zeal and Piety, and not left himself open to that untoward Suspicion, viz. That all this Labour'd Pile of Stage-Reformation is only the Product of Idleness and Abdication.

He



## P R E F A C E.

*He takes up the Whip for the Play-house, as Dionysius the Tyrant did the School-birch, when he had lost the Scepter.*

*'Tis true, Wit and Learning (to do him all just Right) shine through the whole Piece; but when the poorest Ingenii Largitor gives Birth to the Minerva, she looks not quite so lovely, as when she has a more Honourable Parent. Besides, there's another very strong Reason why an Invektive against the Stage, was no earlier Offspring of this Ingenious Author. Alas, 'twas no Subject for Mr. Collier's smiling Days. The Theatre was then too much the Minion of his old Great Master and Mistress; and*



## P R E F A C E.

*and Mr. Collier, we all very well know, was more the Courtier, under the Blessings of that warm Sun, then to rally either This or any other Darling of Power.*

*But as much Ingenuity as this Treatise may boast, it has as much of the Gall too: But where the Satyr falls heaviest, will be no improper Inquiry. 'Tis true, the Lash seems wholly designed against the Theatres: But if the Sufferance be so fatally destructive to Morality, Virtue, nay Religion it self, as that Treatise endeavours to render it, Mr. Collier has more satyriz'd the Pulpit than the Stage: For whilst 'tis undeniably true, that Mr. Collier's is the first, either*  
*Pulpit*



## P R E F A C E.

*Pulpit or Press-Sermon, upon that Text ; this universal Silence of the whole Clergy, must conclude either their Ignorance of such a Fatality, when Mr. Collier is the first Discoverer , or what's worse , their neglect of their Christian Duty, when Mr. Collier is the first Corrector, &c.*

*But if none of all this Capital Guilt shall be proved upon the Play-houses ; and the Influences of the Stage shall have no such mortal Malignity, as this Author threatens from it ; then the Satyr lies nearer home, and only lashes himself.*

*From Lincolns-Inn,  
May 26, 1698.*

*The*



---

THE Ingenious Mr. Collier in calling his Learned *Treatise, A short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, &c.* has not given it a Title that fully reaches the Subject, and the great Design of that Laborious piece of Oratory : For in his whole Discourse, which he divides into six Chapters ; In the First he confronts the present Stage, by setting forth the general Innocence and Modesty of the Ancient Greek and Latin Dramatick Poetry ; and in the Four next Chapters descends to a View of the English Theatres, where he Seats himself down, and very Magisterially sits Censor and Judge upon several particular Dramatick Offenders and Offences, in some, and only some, of our late Plays.

Hitherto, the Title Page seems to carry the Contents of the Book, as if his present Work in hand were only a Christian Correction of *Abuses and Corruption*, viz. *Profaneness and Immorality* crept into the Stage. But in his last Chapter, he plainly tells us, his Design is not *Reformation*, but *Eradication* : For here he throws by the Pruning Hook, and takes up the Axe.

B

In



In due prevention therefore against so dangerous a Weapon, in so angry a Hand, we'll endeavour first to Guard the *Root*; and afterwards we'll joyn with him, and give him free leave to Lop off as many of the *Luxurious Branches*, as shall not be found worth saving.

To begin therefore with some Examination of that *Last Chapter*, which he Entitles, *The Opinion of Paganism, of the Church, and State, concerning the STAGE*, here likewise we'll set out first from Home, viz. in the Opinion of the English State, &c.

“ Here, says our Author, I shall come  
“ down to our own Constitution, and I find  
“ by 39th of *Eliz. chap. 4.* and 1 *Jac. chap. 7th.*

**That all Common Players of Interludes, counterfeit Egyptians, &c. shall be taken adjudged and deem'd Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars, and shall sustain all Pains and Punishments, as by this Act is in that behalf appointed.**

“ The Penalties are Infamous to the last  
“ degree, and Capital too, unless they give  
“ over. 'Tis true, the First Act, viz. 39th  
“ of *Eliz.* excepts those Players which belong  
to



“ to a Baron or other Person of higher Degree, and are Authorized to Play under the Hand and Seal of Arms of such Baron or Personage.

“ But in the latter Statute this Privilege of Licensing is taken away, and all of them are expressly brought under the Penalty without distinction.

’Tis true in this last Act, as he says, the Barons Privilege of Licensing Players was taken away; but this Author, that reads no farther than what wright or wrong serves his own Turn, and quotes Authority but by Halves, forgets that that Act of the 1st. of *Jac.* was but a Temporary Act, to hold in force but that Sessions of Parliament. But this small Trip we’ll forgive him.

But for a little more Light into this 39th. of *Eliz.* by way of Context to explain the Cause. The Clause against Players begins thus. **Be it Enacted that all Persons calling themselves Scholars, going about begging; all Seafaring Men, pretending Losses of their Ships or Goods on the Sea, going about the Country begging; All idle Persons going about in any Country, either begging**



ging or using any subtle Craft, or unlawful Games or Plays, or feigning themselves to have knowledge in Physiognomy, Palmistry, or other like Crafty Science, or such like Fantastical Imaginations: All Persons that be, or utter themselves to be Proctors, Procurors, Patent-gatherers, Collectors for Goals, Prisons or Hospitals, &c.

This Law, 'tis plain, is particularly Level'd against a sort of People that have no settled Habitation, Rovers up and down the Country, and therefore called Vagabonds. But what's all this to the Establishment of our Publick Theatres? Besides, why are all Offenders in this Act thus stigmatiz'd and punish'd as Rogues, but for the practising Frauds and Cheats upon the People?

Nay, this Act chiefly strikes not at the Professions of the Offenders here mention'd, but the Abuse or Corruption of them, as in the Scholar, Seaman, Proctor, Procuror, Patent-gatherer or Collector, as well those as are really so, as those that utter themselves such. The Mendicant Scholar, for Instance, as a Scandal to Learning, the U-  
niversi-



niversities, nay, perhaps the Church it self; the Seaman as an Impostor, *viz.* with his pretended Losses; the Proctor as a Fomentor of Litigious Suits among the People, &c. the Patent-gatherer under the Mask of Publick Charity, Collecting the Mony into his own Pocket, not only to the Abuse of the Country, but to the very Scandal of the Government, when the most Pious Royal Acts of Grace shall be thus fraudulently perverted, to the carrying on so notorious a Cheat : And therefore the Patent-gatherer or Collector Unlicens'd was thus branded, &c. And undoubtedly 'twas much upon the same scandalous Account, that the Unlicens'd Players of Interludes are here herded among all those Rascally Companions : For why should not the Government, with all Reason, surmize an equal Danger to the Publick, from such Unqualify'd Players, and accordingly provide against them, as being Persons who under no Warrant of Authority, nor Honourable Patron to vouch for their Integrity, might be as justly suspected of Roguery, Cheating or Pilfering, as any other of their Brethren in Iniquity, mention'd in the Act ? Nor can this particular Brand upon the Offenders, here mentioned, bear any shadow of Construction to Asperse, Taint or Scandalize, the Profession of Playing it self, and the Publick Theatres supported by



Royal Patents, &c. any more than the same Brand upon the Scholar, the Proctor, the Collector, &c. under the forementioned Corruption, should be interpreted a Reflection upon Religion, Law, Learning or Charity. Nor are His Majesty's Servants, the present Authorized Actors, any more concerned at the Common mistaken Cry of Fools from starting this Statute against them; than any honest Reader of the Ingenious Mr. Collier, with a Talent of Common Sense, ought to be convinced, That this Opinion of the State concerning the Stage, here Quoted, makes any thing for his Cause.

“ About the Year 1580. there was a Petition made to Queen *Elizabeth* for suppressing of Play-houses. ’Tis somewhat remarkable, and therefore I shall describe some part of the Relation.

*Many Godly Citizens, and other well disposed Gentlemen of London, considering that Play-houses, and Dicing-houses, were Traps for Young Gentlemen and others, and perceiving the many Inconveniencies and great Damage that would ensue upon the long-suffering of the same, not only to particular Persons, but to the whole City; and that it would be a great Disparagement to the Governours, and a Dishonour to the Government of this Honourable City, if they should any longer continue, acquainted some Pious Magistrates therewith, desiring them*



*them to take some Course for the Suppression of Common Play-houses, Dicing-houses, &c. within the City of London and Liberties thereof, who thereupon made humble Suit to Queen Elizabeth, and her Privy-Council, and obtain'd Leave of her Majesty to thrust the Players out of the City, and to pull down all Play-houses and Dicing-houses within their Liberties; which accordingly was effected. And the Play-houses in Grace-Church-Street, &c. were quite put down and suppress'd. Rowlidge his Monster lately found out, &c. p. 2, 3, 4.*

The Name of this Author that Mr. Collier has here Quoted, being utterly a Stranger to all the great Scholars in Title-page Learning through St. Paul's Church-yard or Little Britain, I am sorry I am so much in the Dark, that neither Stow, Baker, Cambden, nor Holinsbed, make any mention of this Revolution in or about the Year 1580, viz. this *Abdication* of the *Publick Play-houses* by Queen Elizabeth; however not to dispute the Veracity of an Affirmative in *Verbo Sacerdotis*, but take it as an Orthodox Record, I cannot but stand a little amaz'd to think what wondrous State-opinion he has here discover'd.

First, 'tis here observable that the fore-mention'd Grievances alleged against *Play-houses*, were so far from a publick Censure of the State, that they were only a private Com-



plaint of some *Godly Citizens*, &c. who  
 therewith acquainted some Magistrates, (the  
 Magistrates themselves were not the first  
 Complainants.) The Foundation of, and  
 Arguments against this Grievance, was on-  
 ly on the score of *Inconvenience* and *Damage*,  
 that their Continuance and Sufferance on  
 that Account would be a Dishonour to the  
 Government of the City, not of the *State* nor  
*Church*: For here were no Suggestions either  
 of *Immorality*, *Lewdness*, *Corruption of Man-  
 ners* or *Vanity*, or any *Religious Charge* a-  
 gainst them, as *Godly Men* as the Complai-  
 nants are here presented; whilst on the con-  
 trary the whole Accusation against them, and  
 the whole *Godly Fear* was founded expressly  
 on no other danger, then the *entrapping* the  
 Youth of the City, whether Gentle or Sim-  
 ple, whether Gentlemens Sons or Citizens  
 Pretences or Servants, undoubtedly to the  
 squandering away their Parents or Masters  
 Money; and therefore, if too long suffer'd,  
 a publick Inconvenience or Damage would  
 ensue to the whole City. Hereupon these  
 Complainants Petition'd the Magistracy, and  
 the Magistracy the Queen; and her Gracious  
 Royal Grant was this, That that Eye-sore,  
 a Play-house in *Grace-Church-Street*, in the  
 Heart of the Metropolis, should be suppress'd,  
 and the Players thrust out of the City of *Lon-  
 don*, and possibly banish'd as far as to *Westmin-  
 ster*.



*ster.* And what makes the whole Grievance (without Ralleay) very remarkable, Here are *Play-houses* and *Dicing-houses*, both joyn'd in one Sentence of City Excommunication, the *Dicing-houses* of the two, so much the more dangerous Inhabitants within the Walls, That the Youth of the City, *viz.* Sons, Servants, Prentices or Cash-keepers, from so fatal a Temptation and Snare, might be truly Trapt into the Loss of those Extravagant Sums, perhaps purloin'd or embezell'd from Parents or Masters, to a very dangerous Consequence to the whole City indeed; whilst on the other side, the small Figure, the *Low-priz'd* Play-houses made in those Days, rendred them so little Threatners of any such Capital Danger; that both *Dice-house* and *Play-house* are here Sentenced to *Banishment* together, the one for *Suspicion of Robbery*, and the other of *Petty Larceny*.

Now these two Authorities being all he says upon that Head, *viz. The Opinion of the State concerning the Stage*, I have Quoted them *verbatim* at full length, that the Reader may guess the strength of this Learned Argumentator, by this first Sample we have given of him.

*Ex pede Herculem.*

But to match him with an Opinion of the State concerning the Stage, out of *Stow's Chroni-*



Chronicle, *Anno* 1583. not above three Years after the said Abdication.

Stow 23<sup>d</sup> Eliz. *Comedians and Stage-players of former Time, were very poor and ignorant in respect of these in this Time; but being now grown very skilful and exquisite Actors for all Matters, they were entertain'd into the Service of divers Great Lords, out of which Companies there were Twelve of the Best chosen, at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, they were Sworn the Queens Servants, and were allow'd Wages, and Liveries, as Grooms of the Chamber, and until that Year 1583, the Queen had no Players. Amongst those Twelve Players were Two rare Men, viz. Thomas Wilson for a quick, delicate, refin'd extemporal Wit, and Richard Tarleton, for a wonderous plentiful, pleasant, extemporal Wit. He was the wonder of his Time. He lyeth Buried in Shoreditch.*

Now from this Authority of Mr. Stow, which we may venture to call Authentick, it looks a little odly, that this Chronicle should take such particular notice of the Exalted Court Favours, that smiled upon these Darlings of the Stage, and be so silent upon the Calamity of the other Excluded City Members of the same Fraternity. Methinks the pulling down of Houses, and Banishing the whole publick City-diversion, but just three Years before, shou'd have made as loud



loud an Alarum at this Court Preferment to their Younger Brothers, and certainly deserved as large a Page in this History, at least for the Queen's Honour: For it looks like a little piece of Injustice to that Glorious Memory, to let any part of publick Reformation, such as the suppression of Vice, as *Dice-houses* and *Play-houses*, (and such our Author here designs it) perform'd by that Illustrious Princess, lye untransmitted to Posterity. But when *Play-houses* and *Dice-houses* are so suspiciously joyn'd together by this unknown Author, what if these *Play-houses* should prove but *Gaming-houses* at last? it looks very shrewdly that way, all Circumstances consider'd. But this I only surmise; besides, it looks like misdoubting the Ingenious Mr. Collier's Testimony, and so I'll rather give him his Point.

However, as I am ready to do him Justice as to his Quotations, I hope he will do the like by mine, and allow me at least this Triumph to the Stage, That the *Pious Queen* had a better Opinion of *Players* than Mr. Collier's *Godly Citizens*, when she did them the Honour of Entertaining them as her *Menials* in her *Livery*, and under her own *Roof*. But perhaps that Princess design'd to make a *Reformation* in the *Stage*, as well as the *Church*; and therefore was resolv'd to redeem the *Stage-players* from their Original State



State of *Infamy* and *Slavery*, Quoted pag. 241. where he tells you, *That the Romans refused the Jus Civitatis to Players, seiz'd their Freedom, and made them perfectly Foreign to the Government, which St. Augustine was pleas'd to commend 'em for.* And afterwards page 256. *The whole Tribe of them was thrown out of all Honour and Privilege. They were neither suffer'd to be Lords nor Gentlemen.*

Now notwithstanding not only all these *Pagan* Blots in their Scutcheon, but even the very *Theodosian Code*, that page 241. calls them *Personæ Inhonestæ*; belike this Gracious Queen was pleas'd to give them that gentler Treatment, under her *English*, then they had found either from the *Civil* or *Heathen* Laws; and at least advanc'd them to tread very near the Heels of *Gentlemen*, under such Royal Smiles, and the kind Court Reception she gave them.

But methinks this Ingenious Quoter of History need not have look'd so far back as to 1580. or Queen *Elizabeths* 39. or *Jac.* 1st. for a National Opinion of the *Stage*: Here was a Modern one of much fresher Memory, and more pat to his purpose, when the Stage-plays lay under a more Universal Ab-dication, viz. in the Reign of those later Powers at the Helm, who with no little A-ctivity



Activity leap'd over the *Block*, and the whole *White-hall Stage* it stood upon, and yet stumbled at the *Straw*, &c. A profane *Comedy* or *Tragedy*, were all Heathen and Anti-christian, but Pious *Regicide* and *Rebellion*, were Religion and Sanctity with them. The *Camel* would go down, but the *Gnat* stuck in their Throats.

Now this Learned Gentleman ought by all means to have Quoted this National Opinion of the *Stage*, as not only an Argument much more to his Cause, but a Relation that in pure Gratitude to the Patrons of his Book, ought not to have been omitted. For as this Author's View of the *Stage* is that more than Ordinary Darling to the Gentlemen of that Kidney, he cou'd in Honour and Justice do no less than tickle 'em with their own Memoirs. Nay as the whole Society of the Gentlemen of the *Calves-head Feast*, have made this Book their particular Bosom Favourite, it would be prudent in the Author, (and perhaps the Book was Compos'd and Calculated for that purpose) to harangue so considerable a Party; for 'tis a hard World we live in, and the gaining of good Friends may be serviceable.

From these, next let us see how the *Stage* stands discouraged by the Laws of other Countries, as he has already shew'd you how it stands in our own.

“ To



“ To begin with the *Athenians*. These  
 “ People Plutarch tells you, thought a Comedy  
 “ so unreputable a Performance, that they made  
 “ a Law, that no Judge of the Areopagus  
 “ should write one.

· This Learned Gentleman is resolved to  
 make his Foreign *State-Authority* against the  
 Stage and his *English* one all of a piece. For  
 methinks this *Athenian* Law, that only pro-  
 hibited the Gravity of a Judge from writing  
 a Comedy, Recorded by Mr. Collier in Mo-  
 numental Black and White, as the *Athenian*  
 State-opinion against *Plays*, is certainly that  
 most charming Argument, enough to set  
*Heraclitus* himself a smiling.

“ The *Lacedemonians*, who were remar-  
 “ kable for the Wisdom of their Laws, &c.  
 “ Their Government would not endure the  
 “ Stage under any Regulation.

Well, here's one positive Bill of Exclusion.

“ To pass on to the *Romans*. Tully in-  
 “ forms us, that their Predecessors counted  
 “ all *Stage-plays* uncreditable and scandalous.  
 “ Infomuch that any *Roman* who turned  
 “ Actor, was not only to be Degraded, but  
 “ likewise as it were Disincorporated, and  
 “ Unnaturaliz'd by the Order of the Cen-  
 “ fors.

This



This *Roman* State-opinion is almost as Doughty a Quotation as his *Athenian* one. For here the Predecessors of the *Romans* counted Plays uncreditable, &c. But their kinder Successors, belike were of a contrary State-Opinion. Their Fore-fathers only past it as a Temporary Act, like the first of *fac*. For the uncreditable Player was afterwards set *rectus in Curia*. And how did those opinionated Predecessors (pray mark it) handle the *Roman* Offender that turn'd Author? Why truly, as *Cicero* cited by *St. Augustine* tells us, They Disincorporated and Unnaturaliz'd him. And how did they do all this? Why truly, *as it were*. Their Censors of the *Stage* did put their Order in Execution but very gently. Well, to do this Author as much Justice, as he has done the *Roman* Censors, I must own to the World, that he argues (*as it were*) most judiciously; and, *as it were*, to the purpose.

*We read in Livy, That the Young People kept their Fabulæ Attellanæ to themselves.*  
 “ They would not suffer this Diversion to  
 “ be blemish'd by the *Stage*. For this Reason,  
 “ as the Historian observes, the *Actors* of  
 “ the *Fabulæ Attellana* were neither Expell'd  
 “ their Tribe, nor refused to serve in Arms,  
 “ both which Penalties it appears the *Com-*  
 “ *mon Players* lay under.

Here



Here *Livy* gives us another *Roman State-Account* in Relation to the *Stage*, viz. That some of their Dramatick Entertainments were thought worthy to be the particular Performance of *Gentlemen*, who belike were either so pleas'd with it, or so proud of it, as to Monopolize the Diversion to themselves, and all without the least Stain to their Gentility. That Lash of the *Roman Censors* was only, as it appears, or, as it were, for the poorer Hirelings Players; and for this very good Reason,

*Et quod  
Turpe est cerdoni Volesos Brutosque decebit.*

Playing in it self belike was no fault, taking Money for it was all.

His last State Opinion is, "That in the *Theodosian Code* Players are called *Personæ Dishonestæ*, &c. That is (to Translate it softly) Persons Maim'd, and blemish'd in their Reputation. Their Pictures might be seen at the Play-house, but were not permitted to hang in any creditable Place of the Town, the Function of the Players being scandalous by the Civil Law.

As scandalous as the Civil Law had render'd Players, however these scandalous Fellows were handled as softly as *Mr. Collier* Translates :



flates; Their scandal was so little a publick Nuisance, that the Christian Government, even in its primitive Lustre, always suffer'd them amongst them; and as *Gondibert* says,

— *Is not Powers Permission a Consent,  
Which is in Kings the same as to Ordain;  
And Ills ordain'd are free from punishment?*

But of this Subject, I shall have occasion to be more at large.

These few State Memoirs against the *Stage*, that *Stage* that Flourish'd in the *Greek* and *Roman* Empires, above a Thousand Years together; in the Histories of so many Ages, and through two such Spacious Empires, are all he can find us; I dare not say, will not; for he's never sparing of Scandal if he knew where to get it.

To all these State Authorities, he finishes that Head of his Discourse with a long Pastoral Letter of the Lord Bishop of *Arras* in *Flanders*, publish'd about two Years ago against Plays; too long here to repeat.

But here I am afraid our Author mistakes himself. For one single *Flandrian* Doctor, as I take it, is not a whole National Opinion; and therefore this Pastoral Letter is but a very indifferent Authority upon that Head.

C

Now



Now for another Head, which he calls the Testimony of the most celebrated Hea-then Philosophers, Orators and Historians, concerning the Stage.

To begin with *Plato*, this Philosopher tells us, "That Plays raise the Passions, "and pervert the use of them, and by consequence are dangerous to Morality. For "this Reason he banishes these Diversions "his Common-wealth.

*Aristotle* lays it down for a Rule, "That "the Law ought to forbid young People "the seeing of Comedies, such Permissions "not being safe till Age and Discipline had "confirmed them in Sobriety, fortified their "Virtue, and made 'em as it were proof "against Debauchery. That the force of "Musick and Action is very affecting, it "commands the Audience, and changes the "Passions to a resemblance of the Matter "before them.

Here the Charge of *Plato* and *Aristotle* against Plays somewhat agrees, viz. in *Raising the Passions*, which *Aristotle* Expounds the changing the Passions of the Audience to a Resemblance of, or Sympathy with, the Matter before them ; only *Plato* sat a little the severer Judge upon them ; for he Banisht them his Common-wealth : But *Aristotle* carries not Matters so high as to a total Exclusion, but allows them as an innocent Diversion



-sion to Persons of mature Age and Discretion.

But methinks Mr. *Collier* gives but a lame Account of *Plato's* Reason for Banishing Plays from out his Common-wealth. For I can hardly believe that that Learned Philosopher, whatever Motives he had for Excluding Plays from his Government, would have talk'd so far out of his own natural Philosophy, as to tell us that *Raising a Passion perverts the use of it*. For if, as *Aristotle* explains the Case, the Raising the Passion is here meant, That the Passion represented on the Stage imprints the same Passion into the Audience (a Point which we shall hardly grant him, and which we shall have occasion to speak of hereafter :) Yet all this while, if the worst Passion or Representation on the Stage should have this wondrous Operation upon the frail Audience; For instance, if a Man should see a *Hercules Furens*, and grow as mad, and pull up Oaks as fast as he; or a Lustful *Tarquin*, and presently fall a Ravishing: Or a Young Lady should see a lewd *Thais*, and immediately take Taint, and play the Wanton like her; however here's no perverting the use of the worst of all these Passions. 'Tis true, all these foremention'd Passions are none of the best: But the worst Passion in producing its own natural bad Effects,



*Plato* would hardly have call'd it, perverting the use of the Passion. But *Mr. Collier* in *verbo Sacerdotis* assures us, he Translates faithfully, and therefore as wise a Man as *Plato* was, we are bound to give it against him.

“*Tully* cries out upon Licentious Plays  
“and Poems, as the Bane of Sobriety and  
“Wise thinking. That Comedy subsists up-  
“on Lewdness, and that Pleasure is the root  
“of all Evil.

“*Plutarch*, he tells us, was of the Opini-  
“on that Plays were dangerous to corrupt  
“Young People: (And here he joyns with  
“*Aristotle*.) And therefore Stage-Poetry,  
“when it grows too hardy and licentious,  
“ought to be checkt.

Here *Plutarch* concurs with *Tully*, viz.  
That Plays are to be checkt only when too  
Licentious, as the Bane of Sobriety, and an  
Excitation to Lewdness.

“*Livy* reports the Original of Plays a-  
“mong the *Romans*, viz. That they were  
“brought in upon the score of Religion, to  
“pacifie the Gods, and remove a Mortality.  
“But then he adds, That the Motives are  
“sometimes good, when the Means are  
“stark naught; that the Remedy in this  
“Case was worse than the Disease, and the  
“Atone-



“ Atonement more Infectious than the  
 “ Plague.

*Livy* is an Author, that Mr. *Collier* has all the reason in the World to set a value upon ; for he's a Man of his own Gall. He owns that Plays were Originally an Institution founded upon Religion, that by their Divine Power and Influence they pacified the Anger of the Gods, and removed a Pestilence, or some other general Mortality. (For he plainly confesses they did the Work, not the Cure design'd, but perform'd.) Yet with all these sovereign and pacifick Virtues, and the whole Glory of a National Deliverance wrought by them, the Remedy was a worse Plague than that it had cured. Could Mr. *Collier* himself have declaim'd more pathetically !

“ *Valerius Maximus*, *Livy*'s Cotemporary,  
 “ gives much the same account of the Rite  
 “ of Theatres at Rome. 'Twas Devotion  
 “ that built them. And for the Perform-  
 “ ance of those Places, which Mr. *Dryden*  
 “ calls the *Ornaments* ; this Author Censures  
 “ as the *Blemishes of Peace* : And which is  
 “ more, he affirms, They were the occasi-  
 “ ons of Civil Distractions, and that the  
 “ *State* first blush'd, and then bled for the  
 “ Entertainment. He concludes, the Con-  
 “ sequences of Plays were intollerable.



And very well he might conclude so, if he was of his own Cotemporaries Opinion, *viz.* That they were a worse Plague than what they cured. But methinks these two *Roman* Authors between them have given Plays an unaccountable Power; for belike they could make Peace in Heaven, and raise Wars on Earth; they pacified the Gods, but set the World at Dissention. And indeed had either the Spirit of a *Livy* or *Collier* reign'd amongst them, those Civil Distractions had been not at all to be wonder'd at: For such angry Gentlemen would have found Matter of Quarrel with Plays, though for their atoning of Heaven, and averting of Judgements.

*Seneca*, the Philosopher, he tells us, was very angry at the Play-house, and for this Reason, "That scarce any Body would apply themselves to the study of Nature and Morality, unless when the *Play-house* was shut, and the Weather foul. That there was no Body to teach Philosophy, because there was no Body to learn it. But that the Stage had Nurseries and Company enough.

This Quarrel of *Seneca* against the Stage, I confess was highly reasonable; for undoubtedly that angry Gentleman of Learning was sensibly touch'd in the most tender part, *viz.* *Honour* and *Interest*. Perhaps the  
Auditory



Auditory had found as much good Instruction to be glean'd up at a Play-house Lecture, as at a Philosophy one; and so because the Play-house-School got ground of the Philosophers, 'twas high Time, to cry out, *Great was his own Diana of Ephesus.*

“*Tacitus* relating how *Nero* hired decay'd  
 “Gentlemen, for the Stage, complains of the  
 “Mismanagement; and lets us know, 'twas  
 “the part of a Prince, to Relieve their Necessity,  
 “and not to tempt it, &c. And that  
 “his Bounty should rather have set them  
 “above an ill Practice, then put them upon it.

Though *Nero's* Conduct, was not always to be Vindicated, however, begging both *Tacitus* and Mr. *Collier's* Pardon, I must give it on his side in this Case; and say, he was here very much in the Right. For if that Prince thought it no Degradation to his own Imperial Dignity, Personally to Act in Plays himself, I know no Reason he had to think it either a Shame or a Condescension in a Private Gentleman, and a Decay'd one too, to come upon the Stage. If the Sovereign could play the *Histrion*, sure the Subject was not above it.

“Plays, in the Opinion of the Judicious  
 “*Plutarch*, are dangerous to corrupt Young  
 “People; and therefore Stage-Poetry, when



“it grows too Hardy and Licentious, ought  
“to be check’d.

Here *Plutarch*’s Charge against the Play-house, is not over severe ; the Dangers from the Stage only threaten’d the Younger sort of People. Wisdom and Gravity, nay, possibly Mr. *Collier* himself, might enter a Play-house Walls, and come off unhurt. Nay, as Dangerous as it might be even to Youth it self ; the Danger belike lay not either in the Play-house or the Play ; but the Abuses and Corruptions that crept into the Representations there : For he condemns the Stage-Poetry, but only when it grows too *Hardy* and too *Licentious*. *Plutarch*’s Check does not reach Mr. *Collier*’s, he brings only the pruning Hook.

I have here recited every Individual Authority quoted by Mr. *Collier*, of his Heathen Philosophers, Historians, and Orators ; I think they are somewhat short of half a Score. And how far their several Authorities reach, I hope I have indifferently well explain’d.

Well, to Sum up this Heathenish Evidence. This Learned Scholiast has made hard shift to muster up a little above half a dozen Philosophers, Orators and Historians, that have either enter’d their *Pagan* Protests,  
or



or prefer'd some Arraignment against Plays.

Now the particular Opinions of not half a score of these Dissenting Ethnick Doctors, out of at least half as many hundred of that Fraternity, especially too at their rate of talking, or Mr. *Collier* for 'em, is no more a Conclusive Argument, in my simple Judgment, against the Stage; Then a *Dio- genes* in his Tub and his Rags; or an *Epi- mantus* at his Roots and his Water, should perswade any Rational Man from a clean Shirt upon his Back, and a good House o're his Head; or a good Dish of Meat and a Bottle of Wine for his Dinner, *viz.* if he is able to purchase it.

And now as doughtily as these Orators have supported his Cause, upon this Diminutive Foundation, what a *Colossus* has he rais'd.

For he concludes upon this Head, with telling us, " This was the Opinion of those  
 " Celebrated *Authors*, with respect to *Thea- tres*. They charge 'em with the Corruption  
 " of Principles and Manners, and lay in all  
 " imaginable Caution against them. And  
 " yet these Men had seldom any thing but  
 " this World in their Scheme; and form'd  
 " their Judgment only upon Natural Light,  
 " and common Experience. We see then  
 " to what sort of Conduct we are obliged.  
 " The



“The Case is plain: Unless we are little  
 “enough to renounce our Reason, and fall  
 “short of *Philosophy*, and live *under* the pitch  
 “of *Heathenism*.

Here I must confess this Insinuation is very artful. But all this while these Philosophers that charge the Stage with this Corruption of Principle and Manners, give us but their bare Word for it. Was it enough for the Great *Plato* and *Aristotle*, the very Doctors of the Chair in the Old Heathen Divinity, (for Religion was then but Philosophies Pupil); was it enough, I say, for those Zealots in Morality, to see that Stage that had stood hundreds of Years, and to look upon it, as such a Nursery of Corruption, and say no more against it? Does it look like the Man that the World received him, for *Plato*, to tell us in a Line and a Half, That *Plays raise the Passions, and pervert the use of them, and by consequence are dangerous to Morality*; only to start such an unintelligible Fragment, and not make a little Sermon-Work upon that Text? Perhaps indeed, *Sic Volo, sic Jubeo*, might be enough to banish Plays from his own Commonwealth; and even that short Sentence might be Supererrogation. However, he owed that Justice both to the World around him, and Posterity after him, to read a little longer Esculapian Lecture upon so Epidemick a Disease.

Un-



Undoubtedly had either *Plato* or *Aristotle* but half *Mr. Collier's* Pique against the Play-houses, they would have spared their Ink as little as he has done; and consequently have supplied him with more copious Satyr, and more sensible Arguments upon that Subject.

But for once I'll joyn Issue with him, and to throw some Weight more into his Scale, I'll suppose these half a dozen Philosophical Doctors with their *Natural Light*, and as many Doctor *Collier's* with their *Divine Light*, had all past their Negative Vote against the Stage; however they would hardly carry the Cause. For truly I know no Reason why the Stage should be obliged to stand upon a stronger Basis than the very Sanction of our *Laws* themselves. And I doubt not but a Foundation may be very honest and innocent, though not establish'd by a *Nemine Contradicente*.

To these Testimonies of the Philosophers, &c. he tells you, "He'll add a couple of Poets, who both seem to be good Judges of the Affair in hand.

"The first is *Ovid*, who in his Book, *De Arte Amandi*, gives his Reader to understand that the Play-house was the most likely Place to forage in. Here would be choice,  
" nothing



“nothing being more common than to see  
 “Beauty surprized, Women Debauch’d,  
 “and Wenches pick’d up at those Diver-  
 “sions.

*Ovid. Lib. i.*

*Sed tu praeipue curvis venare Theatris,  
 Hac Loca sunt voto fertiliora tuo.*

—— *Ruit ad celebres cultissima Fæmina  
 Ludos ;*

*Copia judicium saepe morata meum est.*

*Spectatum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut  
 ipsa,*

*Ille Locus casti damna pudoris habet.*

In this Authority of *Ovid*, our Learned Observator, quite forgets himself, and runs off from his Theme. For *Ovid* has nothing to say against the Stage, or any Reflection, or Objection against the Dramatick Presentations there. His present Business, to speak in the modern Dialect, is only with the *Pit*, *Box* and *Galleries*. This Quotation therefore is but very indifferently rank’d under that Head, viz. *The Opinion of Paganism concerning the Stage*. He tells us indeed, the Young and the Fair are to be seen at the Theatres ; That Beauty and High Toppings, *Fæmina Cultissima*, and undoubtedly Beauty and High Virtue too, *Fæmina Castissima* may be seen in a Play-house ; nay, and come thither too,



*to see and be seen*, without any offence to Modesty. And hither 'tis that *Ovid* invites his Young Pupils in the *Art of Love*, to *forage* in (as he calls it.)

And here I'll give Mr. *Collier* the Point, *viz.* That a Debauchee may pick up a Wench at those Diversions. Nor is it any great wonder in so Universal a Concourse of the Young and the Fair, to find some smutty Corn in so large a Field. *Society* and *Crowds*, upon a more sacred Ground than a *Play-house*, are not wholly composed of Honour and Innocence, but that a Carrion Crow may be catch'd even in a flock of Doves.

And truly had not Mr. *Collier* been wilfully over-sighted, he would have inform'd us, that *Ovid* was of the same Opinion. For in the very immediate foregoing Verses to this Quotation, he advises his Young Libertine to forage the *Temples of the Gods*; for he may find the same Game to fly at there too.

And here I am sorry I must joyn with *Ovid*; when much Diviner Altars are subject to the same Profanation. 'Tis not all Religion and Piety that enters a Church Door: Hypocrisie and Wantonness are too often too bold Intruders: And not only to *see and to be seen*, is the height of the Devotion, but possibly the *Lecture* and the *Sermon*  
may



may be sometimes made the screen to the *Rover* and the *Wanton*.

But Mr. Collier, I hope, will not infer from hence, that the Church Doors should be shut up, or Devotion barr'd entrance, for fear of Prophanation or Hypocrisie herding in along with them.

'Tis true, there may be a Case, and a weighty one, for keeping us out from Church, Prayers, Sacraments, and what not; as we find it recorded in a Learned Discourse publish'd by this Orthodox Schoolman, called, *A. Perswasive to Consideration, tender'd to the Royalists, particularly those of the Church of England, Printed in the Year, 1695. being a Discourse upon this Text—In the Day of Adversity consider—Where* Page 35 we Read, as follows.

“ However, I am loth to leave my Church !  
 “ (the Auditor thus Expostulating with him)  
 “ You say well. But can you expect to find the  
 “ Church, where it's peculiar Doctrines are  
 “ disowned; where it's Authority is opposed,  
 “ and betrayed to the Secular Power? Does the  
 “ Being of a Church consist in Brick and Stone?  
 “ What would you do if Jupiter was worshipped  
 “ there? I hope the chiming of the Bells would  
 “ not draw you to the Service of the Idol. If  
 “ it is urged, that we may be so planted as to  
 “ want the Advantage of an Orthodox Pastor;  
 “ What



"What is to be done in such Circumstances?  
 "Must we pray alone, without the Assistance of  
 "Priest or Congregation? To this Question,  
 "after what has been said, I think the Proverb  
 "a sufficient Return; Better be alone than  
 "in ill Company. If 'tis farther objected,  
 "That by this Principle we lose the Benefit of  
 "the Blessed Sacrament. To this I an-  
 "swer,

"1. That this Objection is oftentimes no  
 "more than Pretence: For if People would  
 "take that Pains which the Regard to the In-  
 "stitution requires, it seldom happens but they  
 "might receive it from proper Hands.

"But 2. I answer, That breaking the Unity  
 "of the Church by Schismatical Communion,  
 "and making our selves Partakers of other  
 "Men's Sins, (1 Tim. 5. 22.) is a bad Pre-  
 "paration for the Sacrament. To break a mo-  
 "ral Law for a positive Ordinance, though ne-  
 "ver so valuable, looks like robbing in order to  
 "Sacrifice.

"And therefore when the Case is truly put;  
 "a pious Desire of Receiving will be Equiva-  
 "lent to the Thing. This being an allowed Rule  
 "in Instances of Necessity. So that we cannot  
 "be said to lose the Benefit of the Blessed Sa-  
 "crament, though we are not so happy as to  
 "partake in the Administration.

Now



Now by the same Strength of Reason he has here carry'd the Cause against the whole Church of *England*, and Excluded his Royalists from all publick Devotion; undoubtedly he may shut up the Play-house Doors, and exclude 'em from all publick Diversion too.

The other Poet he joyns with *Ovid*, is the Author of the *Plain-Dealer*.

“ This Poet, in his *Dedication* to *Lady B.*  
 “ some Eminent *Procurefs*, pleads the Merits  
 “ of his Function, and insists upon being Bil-  
 “ leted upon Free Quarter. *Madam*, says he,  
 “ *I think a Poet ought to be as free of your Hou-*  
 “ *ses as of the Play-houses, since he contributes to*  
 “ *the Support of both, and is as necessary to such*  
 “ *as You, as the Ballad-Singer to the Pick-*  
 “ *purse, in convening the Cullies at the Thea-*  
 “ *tres to be pick'd up and carried to a Supper,*  
 “ *and Bed, at Your Houses.* This is frank  
 “ Evidence, and ne're the less true for the  
 “ Air of a Jest.

As frank as this *Plain-Dealer's* Evidence is, here's nothing but what, with a very Grave face of Truth, and in as earnest a Jest, might have been said upon any other Publick places of Meeting, *viz.* the *Dancing-Schools*,  
 the



the *Mall*, the *Parks*, the *Gardens*; and where not? And unless this Man of Morals, would have a Law made to suppress all Places of general Resort, and confine Mankind to Cells and Caves, I know not well how he will prevent all these Enormities that the *Plain-Dealer* has here rallied upon.

Nay, this I will positively averr, That both the *Plain-Dealer* and Mr. *Collier's* Argument on this side, lies much stronger against any other publick Place of Resort than the Play-house. For if Wantonness and Lewdness will creep into all Publick Societies, though of never so innocent a Foundation, the Theatres lie least obnoxious to that Danger. For in all the other forementioned Places of Resort, we make our own Diversion, have no Entertainment but what we give our selves; and consequently, as *Idleness is the Mother of Lust*, and when *We* have least to do, the *Devil* has most; we lie more open to Temptation and Irregular Desires, than we can do in a Play-house, where the Diversion is all found to our Hands, and the Auditor has both his Eyes and his Ears so employ'd, and is so much taken up with either the Pity and Concern for the Distresses of Tragedy; or a Mirth and Delight from the Pleasantry of Comedy, that he has

D hardly



hardly the Leisure to rove after any Imaginations of his own.

And therefore if our Platonick Author is for banishing of Plays, for this only Grievance within the Walls of a Play-House, he may as justly Vote for the rooting up a Garden, for fear the Spider should suck Poyson from the Flowers.

Next, to proceed to his Testimony of the Fathers, he begins with *Theophilus* Bishop of *Antioch*, who lived in the second Century.

“ ’Tis not lawful (*says this Father*) for us  
 “ to be present at the Prizes of the *Gladiators*, least by this Means we should be ac-  
 “ cessary to the Murders there committed.  
 “ Neither dare we presume upon the Liber-  
 “ ties of your other *Shows*, least our Senses  
 “ should be tinctur’d and disobliged with  
 “ Indecency and Prophaneness. The Tragi-  
 “ cal Distractions of *Tereus* and *Thyestes* are  
 “ Nonsense to us. We are for seeing no  
 “ Representations of Lewdness. The Stage  
 “ Adulteries of the Gods and Hero’s are  
 “ unwarrantble Entertainments ; and so  
 “ much the worse because the Mercenary  
 “ Players set them off with all the Charms  
 “ and Advantages of Speaking. God forbid  
 “ that



“ that Christians, who are remarkable for  
 “ Modesty and Reservedness, who are obli-  
 “ ged to Discipline, and train’d up to Vir-  
 “ tue; God forbid, I say, that we should  
 “ dishonour our Thoughts, much less our  
 “ Practice, with such Wickedness as this.

“ *Tertullian*, who lived in the latter End  
 “ of this Century, thus Addresses the Hea-  
 “ thens upon this Subject.

“ We keep off from your Publick Shews,  
 “ because we cannot understand the Warrant  
 “ of their Original. There’s Superstition and  
 “ Idolatry in the Case; and we dislike the  
 “ Entertainment, because we dislike the Rea-  
 “ son of its Institution, &c.

“ His Book, *De Spectaculis*, was wrote on  
 “ purpose to diswade the Christians from the  
 “ publick Diversions of the Heathens, of  
 “ which the Play-house was one, &c.

The Arguments of *Tertullian* which are too  
 long here to recite, were chiefly upon these  
 two Heads, *viz.* That *Pleasure was a bewitch-  
 ing Thing*, and the Levity of the Theatres  
 for that Cause was not consistent with the  
 severer Principles of Christianity. His se-  
 cond Argument was the *low Character* of  
 Players, from the *Magistracy it self*, who,  
 D 2 *though*



*though they abetted the Stage, discountenanced the Players, and cramped their Freedoms, &c.*

To conclude, he insinuates the great danger of being present at those Entertainments; and tells us one sad Example of a *Demoniack Possession*.

“ A certain Woman went to the Play-house, and brought the *Devil* home with her. And when the unclean Spirit was prest in the Exorcism, and ask'd how he durst attack a Christian? I have done nothing (says he) but what I can justifie; for I seiz'd her upon my own Ground.

Before I enter upon any other Argument, I shall make some few Remarks upon this *Possession*.

I shall not Dispute *Tertullian's* Veracity in this Relation; yet methinks, upon a thorough Examination, neither *Tertullian* nor Mr. *Collier* have over-well proved the Play-house to be the Devils own Ground, when the Title's supported by no more Authority than a bare single Affirmative, and that from no other Mouth than the *Father of Lies*, the Devil himself. If the Play-house were really a Chattellany of Lucifer, a Fief of the Infernal Empire, some Do-  
ctors



ctors are of Opinion, the Devil would be the last would tell us so : For as the subtilty of that cunning Seducer strows all his Pit-falls with Flowers, he has neither that Charity for Mankind, nor owes that Service to God, to play thus Booty against himself in so frank a Declaration. However, if that restless Sworn Enemy of Man, had any such generous Principle in him, the *Dives* in Flames had had no occasion of supplicating a Monitory Messenger, to send to his Worldly Friends, from *Abraham* : But might e'ne have begg'd the Civil Favour of that kind Errand from one of his own Tormentors. This I must say, that this foolish Devils imprudent Discovery was so Capital a piece of Treason against the Interest of his own Infernal Kingdom, that really I am of Opinion, to set him *Rectus in Curia Diabolica*, he wants *Absolution*.

Well, but perhaps you'll say, This Discovery was no Blunder in his Politicks, but extorted by the Divine Force of the Exorcism. Really Sir, that may be. However to give this Devil and his Vouchers their due, all this Confession carries a very rank Face of a Sham still. For if it were substantial Verity, that the Play-house was truly and firmly the Devils own Ground, and every Christian Rambler catch'd upon it his



own Lawful, and, to use his own words, Justifiable Seizure ; at this rate, the Devil must be soften'd into a Spirit of that unaccountable Mercy, so very unlike the Bible Picture we have of him, when among so many Thousands and Ten Thousands, nay Millions and Millions of Christians, that since that Day have been caught in a Play-house Walls, so pat for his Clutches ; nevertheless this only single Seizure of that kind is all that's Recorded against him.

I have several times heard this Demoniac Story warmly play'd, as not a little formidable Battery against the Theatres, by some passionate Zealots, no very good Friends either to our Church or our Stage ; and to confirm this Diabolical Authority, those Enthusiasts without question had read, that 'twas no new Thing for the Cloven-foot to deliver Oracles, and therefore doubt not but this may be one.

But in all these Declamations of the Fathers against Stage-plays, St. *Cyprian*, *Tertullian*, and St. *Augustine*, and all of 'em confess 'twas the General Opinion of the Christians that Plays were a *Lawful Diversion* ; and therefore the whole business of those Declamations, is the opening the Christians Eyes, and refuting that too Epidemical



cal Erroneous Opinion; and what occasion'd that spreading Error amongst them was, that the appearance of that general Innocence in those Entertainments gave them that Reception amongst the Christians, that they could not believe them Criminal without some exprefs Divine Precept against them; and accordingly St. Cyprian, the Author *de Spectaculis*, argues against those, *who thought the Play-house no unlawful Diversion because 'twas not condemned by exprefs Scripture.*

So Tertullian reproves the Christians, *That their Faith is either too full of Scruples, or too barren of Sense. Nothing (he says) will serve to settle them but a plain Text of Scripture. They hover in uncertainty, because 'tis not said as exprestly, [Thou shalt not go to the Play-house,] as 'tis [Thou shalt not Kill, &c.]*

And here, with all due Reverence to these Christian Fathers, the Scriptural silence in that Case well furnish some more curious Speculations than they have been pleas'd to make; and which I hope will be no unpardonable Inquiry to prosecute a little farther than they have done.

First then, as our Blessed Saviour was Born in the Days of *Augustus*, 'tis known,



by all Historians, that the shutting up of *Janus's* Temple Doors in his Reign, universally open'd those of the Play-houses. Theatrick Representations in all the Provinces of the Spacious *Roman* Empire, were the then Common Publick Diversion and Entertainment, and such they continued many Reigns after him.

Now it may raise a little Wonder why the Apostles, that went forth by a special Command of the Almighty to Convert all Nations, Preaching Repentance, and the Kingdom of Heaven; They that so exactly perform'd that great Commission, as to Arraign or Censure Vice and Impiety from the highest to the lowest, in all its several Branches; not only pronounced their lowder *Anathemas* against the more crying Sins, but read Divinity-Lectures even upon the Wardrobe and Dressing-Box, correcting the very Indecencies of the *Hair*, the *Apparel*, and each uncomely *Gesture*, &c. That these Missioners of *Salvation* should travel through so many Heathen Nations (the *Gentiles* they were sent to call) and meet at every turn the *Theatre* and the *Stage-players* staring them in the very Face, and not make one Repri-mand against them, is a Matter of very serious Reflection.

Had



Had the Play-house been, as St. *Cyprian* calls it, the *Seat of Infection*; or as *Clemens Alexandrinus* much to the same Sense calls it, the *Chair of Pestilence*; and (to join the Authority of the *Unclean Spirit* along with them,) *the Devils own Ground*; I am of Opinion in this Case, that those Divine Monitors, the Apostles, that sets Bars to the *Eye*, the *Ear*, the *Tongue*, to every smallest Avenue that might let in the *Tempter*; would hardly have left the Broad Gates to the Play-house so open, without one Warning to the unwary Christian in so direct a Road to Perdition. Such a Discovery I believe would have been rather the earlier Cautionary Favour of some of our kind Evangelical Guardians, then the Extorted Confession of our greatest Infernal Enemy two hundred Years after.

'Tis true, St. *Cyprian* gives a Reason for this Apostolical Silence, *viz.* " That some  
 " things are more strongly forbidden be-  
 " cause unmention'd. The Divine Wisdom  
 " would have had a low Opinion of Chri-  
 " stians, had it descended to particulars in  
 " this Case. Silence is sometimes the best  
 " Method for Authority. To forbid, often  
 " puts People in mind of what they should  
 " not do; and thus the force of the Precept  
 " is lost by naming the Crime, &c.

Here



Here the World must pardon me, if I presume to say, That St. Cyprian plays more the *Orator* than the *Church-man*. I hardly believe that there has been that Crime too Black to lie upon Scripture Paper, when the very Sin that drew down Fire upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* has been recorded there : Nor can I grant him his Consequence, *viz. That such Black Sins are the more strongly forbidden because unmention'd.* This I am certain, That the many, the loud, and the repeated Fulminations of Vengeance from the Mouths of the *Patriarchs*, the *Prophets*, and the *Apostles*, denounced against the most Tremendous Iniquities and Abominations, does not very well prove the Scriptural Silence in such Cases.

Besides, St. Cyprian here, under the notion of a *Reason* for such Silence, either flies wide from the Matter, or else contradicts himself. The Charge he all along lays against Plays, is the *Levities and Impertinences of the Comedies*, the *Ranting Distractions of Tragedies*, that Plays were originally the Institution of *Heathen Idolatry*. That as they are *Lewd Representations*, they are of this dangerous Consequence, *viz. That by using to see such Things we shall learn to do them, &c.* And that therefore we must draw off our Inclinations from these *Vanities, &c.*

All



All this is so far from a Blackness too deep for Paper, or a Monster too hideous for the Modesty of Divine Revelation to expose to Light, that nothing can be less. But granting this Christian Father the liberty of being sometimes cooler, and sometimes warmer upon that Subject, and allowing these Levities and Vanities to be so many *Gorgons* and *Medusa's*; granting the Play-house to be that *Rock*, that *Quick-sand*, or any other more devouring Gulph; however, the Divine Wisdom in that Case, instead of having a low Opinion of Christians, had it descended to a particular Caution against it; especially when the hidden Rock or Quicksand lay so unseen by the general Eye of Christians, that both by *Tertullian* and *St. Cyprian's* Confession, the Danger appear'd so little, that 'twas the publick Christian Opinion, the Play-house was a Lawful Diversion; on the contrary, the Divine Wisdom, I say, had as much occasion of some seasonable Admonition, to hang out as a Watch-Light or Sea-Mark, against those hidden Rocks, as ever *Aaron* had to warn the Children of *Israel* from the Tents of *Coran*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*, before the Earth opened to swallow them: And undoubtedly had there been any such true Danger in a Play-house, the Divine Wisdom, without either a low Opinion of it  
self



self in descending to *give* such a particular Caution, or the weak-sighted Christian to *want* it ; amongst its other many thousand particular Monitory Favours and Mercies, wou'd have added this One more to that infinite Number. I wish this Divine Author has not himself a much lower Opinion of Christians, when to crutch his Argument against the Play-house, he would insinuate, that even a Gospel-Precept may be sometimes ensnaring, and the very Commands of God himself against a Sin, a Temptation to draw us into it ; and consequently that in some Cases it is much safer, and more divine Prudence, to leave the Sinner to grope out his way to Salvation, than to give him a Light to guide him thither.

Besides, these Fathers, instead of defending the Spiritual Silence against Plays (the main Argument they drive at,) the Gospel-Light being no ways wanted to guard against them, but that even the very Light of Nature was sufficient in that Case ; On the contrary, as they have managed their Indictment against the Stage, have put it so far out of the power of Nature, that they seem to enforce the absolute necessity of a particular Revelation. Pilot even to discover the Danger that lay there.



For Instance, *Tertullian*.

“ Will you not avoid this Seat of Infe-  
 “ ction? The very Air suffers by their Im-  
 “ purities, and they almost pronounce the  
 “ Plague! What tho’ the Performance may  
 “ be in some measure Pretty and Entertain-  
 “ ing? What, tho’ *Innocence*, yes, and *Vir-*  
 “ *tue* too, shines through some part of it?  
 “ ’Tis not the Custom to prepare Poison un-  
 “ palatable, nor make up Rats-bane with  
 “ *Rhubarb* and *Sena*. No, to have the Mis-  
 “ chief speed, they must oblige the Sense,  
 “ and make the Dose pleasant. Thus the  
 “ Devil throws in a Cordial Drop to make  
 “ the Draught go down; and steals some  
 “ few Ingredients from the *Dispensatory* of  
 “ Heaven. In short, look upon all the en-  
 “ gaging Sentences of the Stage: Their  
 “ Flights of Fortitude and Philosophy, the  
 “ Loftiness of their Stile, the Musick of the  
 “ Cadence, and the fineness of their Con-  
 “ duct; Look upon it only, I say, as  
 “ Honey dropping from the Bowels of a  
 “ Toad, or the Bag of a Spider. Let your  
 “ Health over-rule your Pleasure, and don’t  
 “ Die of a little *Liquorishness*.

Now if the Visible Beauties of the Stage  
 were made up of all those attracting  
 Charms



Charms and Graces, *viz.* Engaging Sentences, Morality, Philosophy, Virtue and Innocence, and all so shining; could Nature in this Case, as St. Cyprian says, so govern, where Revelation does not reach, as to discover the Latent Poison in the Pill, and all mix'd up with so many Ingredients of Heaven, and under so many Leaves of Gold? Could meer Natural Light supply the Holy Text, to warn us against so lovely and fair a Face, set forth by Tertullian with all these ensnaring Enchantments, without any want of a Spiritual Illumination, to tell us, 'Tis the Syren that wears it?

Tertullian however endeavours to palliate this Scriptural Silence, and tells us, *Though Plays are not expressly forbidden in Scripture, we have the meaning of the Prohibition, though not the Sound, in the First Psalm, Blessed is the Man that walks not in the Counsel of the Ungodly, nor stands in the way of Sinners, nor sits in the Seat of the Scornful.*

I hope no Man will interpret my Amazement at the Application of this Text to the Condemnation of Play-houses, to any want of Veneration to so celebrated a Pillar of the Church as Tertullian; nay, and all this the substantial Meaning, only the empty Sound wanting! ——— And here I must declare,



clare, had the *Demoniack* Woman had no plainer Christian Light to lead her to Heaven, than this to shew her the Snares of a Play-house, I am very much afraid she had continued under *Possession* still, and never got loose from the Infernal Talons that seiz'd her there.

And here again I must once more beg my Reader not to charge me with the Ridiculing of Divine Writ, when I declare from my Soul I should as soon quote, and with as reasonable a Construction, that Verse in the *Psalms*, *Why does the Heathen rage, and the People imagine a vain Thing?* for a two-edg'd Sword against *Seneca* and *Terence*, the Ranting of Tragedy, and the Fiction of Comedy; and that *Hercules Furens*, and the Comical *Davus*, were both hewed down together.

But to return to the Fathers.

If the Heathen Dramatick Poetry, in the Plays of their Times, were so scandalous, so lewd, and infamous a Representation, that the very mention of them in Divine Precept, though to set the Mark of *Cain* upon them, [*Thou shalt not see a Play*] by the Venerable *Tertullian* being even rank'd with [*Thou shalt not Kill*], were too black  
a Re-



a Record to foul the very Paper with: I am here very much afraid, that this Learn'd Histriomastix, our Author, has thrown away a great deal of Oyl and Labour in washing the Ethiop; when in his First Chapter of *The Immodesty of the Stage*, in his comparing the Ancient and Modern Play-wrights, he clears almost the whole Body of the Greek and Latin Dramatick Poets from every Thing so much as tending to Lewdness or Smut, or even a double Entendre that way. In short, what with the Native Morals and Virtues of the Poets themselves, and the Superiour Care of the Publick *Inspectors* and *Censors* of the Theatre, he sets forth, at large, that Modesty and Innocence of the Heathen Stage, so far from encouraging Lewdness and Debaucheries, corrupting of Manners, &c. or any of those hideous Phænomena's through that long and learned Harangue of the Fathers against them; that hardly any thing, scarce North and South, can be more opposite, than the Sentiments of these Doctors of the Primitive Church in his last Chapter, and of this sometimes Minister of the English Church in the first Chapter.

For Instance, he begins with *Plautus*, an Author that, he tells us, "Has left us 20  
"intire Comedies; out of which Volume  
"of



“ of Antiquity, he quotes but five censur-  
 “ able Passages, and those but moderate  
 “ ones, *viz.* *Lena* and *Bacchis* the Strumpet  
 “ are airy and somewhat over-merry, but  
 “ not obscene. *Chalinus*, in *Womans*  
 “ *Cloths*, is the most remarkable. *Pasicompa*  
 “ *Charinus* his Wench, talks too freely to  
 “ *Lysimachus*, and so does *Sophroclidiscia*,  
 “ Slave to *Lemnoselene*; and lastly, *Phro-*  
 “ *nesiam*, a Woman of the Town, uses a  
 “ double Entendre to *Stratophanes*. This  
 “ Poet, he farther informs us, confesses  
 “ Smut a scandalous Entertainment; that  
 “ such Liberties ought to fall under Neg-  
 “ lect, to lie unmentioned, and be blotted  
 “ out of Memory. And that this was not  
 “ a Copy of his Countenance, we may  
 “ learn from his Compositions. Nay, this  
 “ very *Plautus*, who wrote in an Age not  
 “ perfectly refin’d, has regard to the Re-  
 “ tirements of Modesty, and the Dignity  
 “ of Humane Nature; and though he often  
 “ seems to design his Plays for a Vülgar  
 “ Capacity, he does not make Lewdness  
 “ his Business.

Of *Terence*, who appear’d when Breed-  
 ing was more exact, and the Town better  
 polish’d, he says, “ That he managed ac-  
 “ cordingly, and has but one faulty bor-  
 “ dering Expression, which is that of

E

“ *Chremes*



“ *Chremes* to *Clitopho*. This single Sentence  
 “ apart, the rest of his Book is unfullied,  
 “ and fit for the nicest Conversation. Nay,  
 “ his very Strumpets are modest, and con-  
 “ verse not unbecoming their Sex.

Then for *Seneca*, he assures us, “He is clean  
 “ throughout the whole Piece; and stands  
 “ generally off from the point of Love.  
 In fine, to dispatch the *Latins* together, he  
 tells you, “ They had nothing smutty so  
 “ much as in a Song, and kept their Lan-  
 “ guage under Discipline.

To do the same Right to the *Greek* Poets  
 he tells us, “ How the Stage had both its  
 “ beginning and highest Improvement at  
 “ *Athens*.——*Æschylus* was the first who  
 “ appear’d with any Reputation: His Ge-  
 “ nius seems noble, and his Mind generous,  
 “ willing to transfuse it self into the Audi-  
 “ ence, and inspire them with a Spirit of  
 “ Bravery. His Materials were shining  
 “ and solid, &c. This Tragedian had al-  
 “ ways a nice Regard to good Manners, &c.  
 “ and so govern’d his Expressions of Love,  
 “ that they carried a Face of Virtue along  
 “ with them.

To *Sophocles*, that next succeeded him on  
 the Stage, he gives this Character, “ That  
 “ he



“ he was in Earnest an extraordinary Per-  
 “ son ; and among his many eminent and  
 “ all virtuous Qualifications, when he con-  
 “ cerns himself with Amours, nothing can  
 “ be more temperate or decent, &c. His  
 “ Descriptions of Love are within the  
 “ Terms of Honour ; the Tenderesses are  
 “ solemn as well as soft ; they move to  
 “ Pity and Concern, and go no farther.  
 “ In fine , like his Predecessor, he lightly  
 “ touches upon an amorous Theam ; and,  
 “ to use our Author’s ingenious Allusion,  
*He glides along like a Swallow upon the Water,*  
*and skims the Surface, without dipping a*  
*Feather.*

“ Next for *Euripides*, his Character a-  
 “ grees too with his Elder Brothers, even  
 “ to priding himself in Virtue and Mo-  
 “ desty, delivering great Thoughts in com-  
 “ mon Language, and being drest more  
 “ like a Gentleman than a Player. His Di-  
 “ stinction lies in the Perspicuity of his  
 “ Stile ; in Maxims and Moral Reflection ;  
 “ in his peculiar Happiness for touching  
 “ the Passions, especially that of Pity ; and  
 “ lastly, in exhausting the Cause, and ar-  
 “ guing *pro* and *con* upon the stretch of  
 “ Reason. And for Modesty he is intirely  
 “ in the Authors Favour, &c. He calls  
 “ Whoring Stupidness and playing the



“ Fool; and to be Chast and Regular is  
 “ with him, as well as with *Æschylus*,  
 “ *Σαφειν*. As much as to say, 'tis the  
 “ consequence of Sense and right Think-  
 “ ing, &c.

'Tis true, he singles out one frail Brother  
 of the Quill, *Aristophanes*, and finds a very  
 foul Blot in his Scutcheon, viz. *Atheism*;  
 and hereupon very passionately declaims up-  
 on that Topick, viz. upon his ridiculing  
 the Gods, and breaking in upon Religion, &c.  
 for several whole Pages. But as heavy as  
 the Atheist lies upon him, still he wipes off  
 the Imputation of Debauchery, assuring us,  
 “ That as to the business of Love, *Aristo-*  
 “ *phanes* always declin'd it. He never pat-  
 “ ches up a Play with Courtship and Whin-  
 “ ing, tho' he wrote nothing but Come-  
 “ dy, &c. 'Tis true, as to the Atheism of  
*Aristophanes*, tho' it may appear somewhat  
 a Sin against the Athenian Light of Theo-  
 logy: It happen'd to be a Fault on the bet-  
 ter side, (at least in the Christian Scale)  
 when only against the Libertine Household  
 of Heathen Gods, where neither Infidelity  
 nor Apostacy were altogether so Capital.

Now, as such were the Characters of the  
 Ancient Poets, and those the very Founders  
 of the Feast in the Theatrical Entertain-  
 ments



ments in *St. Cyprian* and *Tertullian's* Days, and some Ages after them, I cannot but once more repeat my Amazement at their over-passionate Exclamations against the Stage, especially upon the mistaken Topick of Lewdness and Debauchery.

After all this honest and faithful Review of the Ancient Stage, taken even by our kind Author himself, I fancy he has given us some more substantial Reasons for the Scriptural Silence against Plays, than all these Fathers have done. For if such, by his own generous Acknowledgment, was the Stages Primitive State of Innocence; (a Confession which we highly stand obliged to him for, though like one of *Sir Martin Marral's* Discoveries, considering how little it makes for his Cause,) I fear we shall thank him for a Favour he never intended us.

If therefore, as I was saying, or rather our Author has said for me, such was not only the Innocence of the Heathen Stage, under all the Restrictions of *Chastity, Modesty* and *Decency*, not only from the native Principles of the Authors, but also from the Regulation of Publick Authority; but even such was the Merit (so I may call it) of those Theatrick Representations so little



tending to the Corruption of Manners, That *several of them were written with a Genius*, to speak in his own Language, enough to transfuse and inspire a Spirit of Bravery, so far from a Check, as to be rather an Excitation to Virtue. Here, upon all these Concessions even from our Author himself, (provided still that as Stage-Plays are only Humane Institutions, and Worldly Diversions, and that that Objection shall be found no Bar to this Plea of Innocence, as that I hope we shall make out;) this then being the Stage, and these the Plays that faced the whole Travels of the Apostles; here's a very substantial Argument for the Evangelical Silence, in not one word against them; for the Mouths of those Divine Oracles open'd only to the Correction of *Vice*.

Nor will it raise any part of an Objection against this Argument for their Silence, &c. That the Original innocent Constitution of Plays was sometimes Corrupted, their Modesty Debauch'd, and Abuses crept in amongst them, as this Author often observes against them; For as the very Heathens themselves had their Censors and Inspectors appointed to correct and punish those Abuses, and to keep the Stage in the bounds of Modesty, I hope the Christians needed no particular Scriptural Precept in  
that



that Case: The Divine Wisdom must then have most truly had a low Opinion of Christians, to think they wanted any particular Evangelical Light to follow, even where the Ignorant Heathen had led before them. And as to the more horrid Representations of the Amphitheater, so frequent in the *Neronian* Reign, in which *St. Paul* died; here indeed there wanted no Evangelick Command, to warn the Christian from those Execrable Bloody Walls, where Murder upon Murder even in cold Blooded Sport was made a Publick Entertainment; The Divine Wisdom, as *St. Cyprian* says, had had a low Opinion indeed to think the Christian could want a Heavenly Caution of entering those Shambles of Humane Butchery.

Besides, to shew how little the Dramatick Poetry lay under the Gospel Censure, our Author, (tho' upon another occasion,) is pleas'd to quote that Text of *St. Paul*, *Evil Communications corrupt Good Manners*, as the Expression first of the Comick Poet *Menander*, 290 Years before Christ, and afterwards of *St. Paul* the Apostle. Here I would ask whether *St. Paul* the most Learned of the Apostles, in delivering the Divine Oracles of God, would have incorporated the saying of a Heathen Poet, that possibly had



been spoke a hundred times over on the Publick Stage, by a Hireling Player, into the Gospel of Truth, notwithstanding the Morality and Innocence of the Expression it self; had Stage-Plays in themselves, and that in their worst capacity of Comedies, justly lain under St. Cyprian's Character of them, viz. *That were they not otherwise highly Criminal, the Foolery of them is egregious and unbecoming the Gravity of Believers?*

For some other Instances of St. Paul's Respect for the Poets.

In *Acts 17. 28.* *In him we live and move and have our Being; as certain of your own Poets have said, for we are also his Offspring,*

In his Epistle to Titus, Chap. 1. ver. 14, 15. speaking of the People of Crete, he says in the words of Epimenides the Poet.

Χρῆς αἰ ψευδῆ, καὶ θηρία, καὶ ἄνθρωποι ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ. *One of themselves, even a Prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always Liars, evil Beasts, slow Bellies: This Witness is true, &c.*

Here the Apostle has not disdain'd to quote a Heathen Poet, nay, and honour him with the Title of Prophet.

Now



Now therefore as the Spirit of God spoke by the inspired Apostles, we may venture to boast, it gives some Reputation to the *Poet*, and sure a little Vindication of the Innocence of the *Profession*, that the *Holy Ghost* himself has spoke in the words of a *Menander*, and an *Epimenides*.

But to make a little farther Examination into the Reason of this over-violent Zeal and Vehemence of the Primitive Fathers against the Stage. We are to consider the forementioned Authority, viz. *Theophilus*, *Tertulian*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Minutius Fælix*, and *St. Cyprian*, so faithfully translated by *Mr. Collier*, lived all in the second or third Century, in the Mourning Minority of the *Church of God*, under the Heathen *Persecutions*. For *Constantine*, the first Christian Emperor, began his Reign but in the beginning of the fourth Century. Had not then those Primitive Fathers, with Stakes, Gibbets, Cauldrons, Gridirons, Racks, &c. all before their Eyes, a just cause of Complaint against the Christian Inclination for Plays, Delight and Pleasure at that time of Day? Does the Son from his Fathers Death-Bed go to the Musick-House? or the Widow from her Husbands Funeral to the Dancing-School? Was the Play-house a seasonable Christian Diversion, possibly to come from  
a Lau-



a *Laurences* Gridiron to a *Thyestes* Feast? I may here joyn with *Tertullian*. "In Ear-  
 nest, Christian, our Time for Entertain-  
 ment is not yet ; ye are too craving and ill  
 manag'd, if you are so violent for De-  
 light, page 258.

Besides, was it not a yet greater aggrava-  
 tion to the ill timed Christian Fondness  
 for Plays, to herd, consort and mix with  
 their Tyrants, Persecutors and Murderers  
 the *Heathens*, in their Entertainments and Di-  
 versions? And therefore is it to be doubted, but  
 that this unseasonable Inclination of the  
 Christians for Plays went a great way in the  
*Fathers* Passionate Declamations against  
 them; and undoubtedly to check the Chri-  
 stian Fondness in that Case, push'd 'em up-  
 on the necessity of enlarging upon that stron-  
 ger Argument, *viz.* The *Unlawfulness* of  
 Plays, where the weaker one, the *Indecency*  
 of seeing them, would not prevail?

Nay, as *Clemens Alexandrinus* joyns the  
*Circus* and the *Theatre* together, when he  
 says, *They may not improperly be called the*  
*Chair of Pestilence*. Does not therefore the  
 bloody *Gladiator*, the profession of the Murder at  
 the Prize, as *Minutius Fælix* calls it, the *Secular*  
*Games*, and the *Pantomimi*, and all the rest of  
 the



the more Licentious and Barbarous Heathen Entertainments, go a great way in the Condemnation of the more Innocent Plays, whilst the *Stage* suffers with the Ill Company it keeps; all those horrid Diversions, being at the same time supported by the Tyrant *Pagan* Emperors? Nay, does not the very Christian Horror of those Heathen Tyrants, the Patrons of those Plays, go a great way with these Fathers to the Condemnation of the *Feast* for the *Founders* sake? And therefore is all this Vehemence, though to a *stretch* of Argument, and the *Racking* of Reasons against them, any thing to be wonder'd at?

Suppose we could parallel the same Modern Case; were there, for Instance, any such Diversion as Plays amongst the *Turks*, would not the *Grecian Patriarchs* be as tender of the Christians mixing in that Diversion, more especially if our *Mahometans* were like their *Heathens*, a Spirit of Persecution? Why then are all these Primitive Champions brought down to Battle our Theatres, when their whole Ground of Quarrel and Foundation of Complaint, is so Foreign to the present State of the *English* Stage?

Next, we'll examine the short Account he pretends to give us of the Councils of  
the



the Primitive Church concerning the Stage.

The Council of *Illiberis* or *Collioure*, Decreed, "That it shall not be lawful for any  
"Woman, who is either in full Communi-  
"on, or a Probationer for Baptism, to Mar-  
"ry or entertain any Comedians or Actors;  
"who takes this Liberty shall be Excommu-  
"nicated, *Anno 305. Can. 67.*

"The first Council of *Arles*, Excommu-  
"nicates Players as long as they continue to  
"Act, *Anno 314. Can. 5.*

"The second Council of *Arles* made their  
"20th Canon to the same purpose, and al-  
"most in the same words, *Anno 452.*

"The third Council of *Carthage*, of which  
"St. *Augustine* was a Member, Ordains,  
"That the Sons of Bishops or other Clergy-  
"men should not be permitted to furnish out  
"publick *Shews*, or *Plays*, or be present at  
"them. Such sort of *Pagan Entertainments*  
"being forbidden the *Laity*, it being al-  
"ways unlawful for all Christians to come  
"among *Blasphemers*.

"By the 35th Canon of this Council 'tis  
"Decreed, That Actors or others belong-  
"ing



"ing to the *Stage*, who are either *Con-*  
 "verts or *Penitents*, &c. shall not be de-  
 "nied Admission in the Church, which  
 "our Author remarks, was a Proof  
 "that Players as long as they kept to  
 "their Employment were barr'd *Commu-*  
 "nion.

Another *African* Council declares,

"That the Testimony of People of ill  
 "Reputation, of *Players*, and others of such  
 "scandalous Employments, shall not be ad-  
 "mitted against any Person. *Anno* 424.  
 "Can. 96.

The second Council of *Chaalon* sets forth,

"That Clergy-Men ought to abstain  
 "from all over-engaging Entertainments in  
 "Musick, or Show (*Oculorum auriumq; ille-*  
 "cebris); and as for the smutty and licenti-  
 "ous Insolence of *Players*, and Buffoons, let  
 "them not only decline the hearing it them-  
 "selves, but likewise conclude the Laity  
 "obliged to the same Conduct. *Anno* 813.  
 "Can. 9.

I have here recited his Authority of the  
 Councils of the Church at this full length,  
 as



as affording Matter for several serious Reflections and weighty Considerations. First, then it appears by the exprefs words of the Council of *Carthage*, that the Comedies then Acted, were *Pagan Entertainments*, and generally perform'd by Pagans, *viz.* *Blasphemers*, and for certain were the *Composition* of the Heathen Poets; for we have no Record or mention of any Christian Poet that compiled or wrote any Theatrical Representations; For had there been any such Christian Author, his Name at least, if not some of his Works would in all likelihood have been transmitted to Posterity, as well as so many of the Dramatick Labours of the Heathen Poets: Besides, had there been any such Dramatick Christian Writers, undoubtedly the several *Councils* that prohibited the *Performance* of Plays, and expressely forbid the *furnishing* or *dresssing out* of Shews or Plays, would have much more particularly reprimanded the more Capital Offender, *viz.* the Compiler and Composer of such Entertainments, it being their equal Duty and Caution to crush the Egg as the Cocatrice.

Nevertheless, though Playing then stood upon that Heathenish bottom, however the Christians were apt not only to entertain *Comedians* and *Actors*, but Personally themselves



ſelves to be Actors, nay, and in thoſe very Heathen Compoſitions.

Now here was occaſion of juſt Complaint in thoſe Divine Aſſemblies, the *Councils* of the Church, againſt this Practice of the Chriſtians, were the matter of Playing it ſelf never ſo innocent. For much the ſame Reproach (though not the ſame Apology) lay againſt them, as the Jews threw upon our Saviour, *viz.* for conſorting with *Publicans* and *Sinners*.

Chriſtianity in thoſe Days was in its Morning: The Sun of Righteouſneſs had not fully diſpelled the Heathen Darkneſs and Ignorance. The Chriſtians had the Unconverted Heathen every where round them. And as the great Work of calling in the fulneſs of the *Gentiles* was not yet perfected; it might reaſonably give Offence to the Fathers of the Church, and raiſe ſome ſhadow of fear, that the Chriſtian Condeſcenſion to intermix in the Pagan Diversions and Vanities, *viz.* their *Plays*, and thoſe originally too of an Idolatrous Foundation, might give that Reputation or at leaſt that Countenance to Infidelity, as poſſibly might in ſome meaſure retard the great Work of Universal Conversion.

Now



Now as all these *Councils* commenced from the beginning of the Fourth Century, at, or after the Administration of the *Roman Empire* was lodged in the Hands of Christian Princes, those Primitive Royal Sons of the Church, those Champions of the Faith that would never be wanting in their utmost Zeal and Industry to propagate the Gospel of Truth: Here, I say, it will afford a Matter of the nicest Speculation, *viz.* How *Players* and *Playing* should lie under this publick Censure of the *Church*, and yet *Acting* it self continued unsilenced and unsuppressed by so many successive Christian Emperors.

That it kept all this while so unsuppress'd, is plain and evident; otherwise, why so many repeated Decrees of *Councils* against them, if the occasion of Offence, *viz.* *Playing* it self, had not continued? Nor can it be supposed, had *Playing* been very much offensive, or had but half the black Colours Mr. Collier has laid upon it, but that some Ghostly Counsellors would have advised those Emperors to such a Suppression of the Stage; and undoubtedly they had listen'd to such Advice. Their Power of putting such Advice in Execution was indisputable, and had the Argument been powerful enough  
to



to perswade 'em, without question the *Will* would not have been wanting; and consequently the Christian *Roman* Empire would never have faln short of the Heathen *Plato* in his Common-wealth, in banishing the Playhouse, upon a full Conviction of their Christian Duty to oblige them to such a Reformation: At least, had the Lenity of those Christian Emperors, who propagated the Faith, not by Rods of Iron, but Beams of Mercy, indulged their *Pagan* Subjects to continue their Heathen *Plays* and *Vanities*; nevertheless, 'tis highly to be supposed, they had either used their own Imperial, or commission'd their Ecclesiastical Authority to forbid that Liberty to their *Christian* Subjects.

But as nothing of all this was done, but the open and publick Stage continued unshaken, in defiance of all this Holy Breath against it; what can we in all Reason conclude, but that these Christian Princes lookt back to the fore-mention'd Fathers louder Thunder against the Stage, as only a temporary Blast; the greatest Cloud that rais'd all that Storm, the main Ecclesiastical Matter of Complaint, was dispell'd; for the late *Mourning*, now *Smiling Church*, had thrown off her Cypress, her Wounds were all heal'd, and her Tears wiped away; and

F

thus



thus that great Stage-Stumbling-Block, *viz.* the *unseasonableness* of Mirth and Diversion, was removed. The Christians too now joining in the Heathen Diversion, met their *Friends*, not their *Persecutors* there. And for the bloodier *Gladiators*, and all the other lewder and more barbarous Theatrick Entertainments, they fell in course with the Tyrants that supported them. Thus all these highest Provocations of the Primitive Christian Quarrel against the Theatres composed and ended, and nothing but the Innocent Dramatick Stage left standing; and that to liable to all the Inspection and Regulation of *Censors* and *Supervisors*, upon any Abuse or Corruption: How then must these Christian Emperors look upon these Decrees of the *Councils*, but as an over-warmth of Zeal, a sort of a *Fury-Presentation*, past at their *Vacat Exiguus*, not weighty enough to found a *State-Indictment* upon? Nay, their Sentence perhaps not worthy the Execution, as pronounc'd by not altogether the proper Judges of the Fact: A true Inquisition into the Stage being more the *States*, than the *Churches* Province. Those Reverend Divine Doctors of their *Councils*, pass their Judgment at too far distance; their Gravities come least, or perhaps never into a Play-house Walls; and therefore the full Cognizance of the Matter, and the true Merits



Merits of the Cause, lay not so much in their Reach.

For these therefore, and whatever other Reasons the Primitive Christian Government was induced to continue the *Stage*; Is not here one of the most convincing Arguments for the present Establishment of the Theatres, especially comparing the different Circumstances between them? Our Plays are no *Heathen* Compositions; our *Authors* and *Auditors* profess one *Faith*; our Stage lies under no Ecclesiastical Reprimand from the *Fathers* of our Church: In short, we have so many more favourable Aspects, and all that Weight on our side, in ballance between 'em; enough to silence even Calumny it self.

And thus, as our Stage has so leading an Example as the Primitive Christian Indulgence to warrant its Foundation; as it has received the Protection of Crown'd Heads; it has sometimes had the Honour of their Royal Presence at its Diversions too; and what's yet greater, even Princes of the most exalted Piety have been the Royal Guests within those publick Walls.

In a Sermon upon the Death of the late  
**QUEEN**, preach'd by *William Payne*, D. D.  
 F 2 Rector



Reſtor of St. *Mary Whitechappel*, Chaplain to His MAJESTY, Page 19 and 20. dilating upon that copious Theme, the ſhining Piety of that truly Chriſtian Princeſs, we read as follows :

“ She gave Patterns of Virtue not uncouth or fantaſtick, affected or unnatural, such as we meet in the *Legends*, but what are agreeable to Civil Life, and to all the Stations of this World, what Chriſtianity and the plain Law of God require of us ; and thoſe Things which they had not forbidden, She did not think neceſſary to forbid her Self. The undue Rigours and Severities of ſome Indiſcreet Perſons have done great Harm to Religion and Virtue, by condemning thoſe Things as abſolutely ſinful, which are ſo only by Accident, but in themſelves innocent ; ſuch as *Dancing, Playing at Cards, going to Plays,* and the like. Our Admirable QUEEN could diſtinguiſh here between Duty and Prudence, between Unlawful and Inexpedient. She would not reſuſe thoſe Common Diverſions , nor uſe them too much : She would not wholly keep from ſeeing of Plays, as if they were utterly unlawful, &c.

Here



Here are two Christian Authorities, one from the Theatre and the other the Pulpit, of a contrary Opinion to Mr. Collier, viz. That Plays in themselves are an Innocent Diversion.

And here I must look back to one Argument of the Fathers against the Theatres. St. Chrysostome, to oppose the Worldly Diversion of the Stage, tells us how St. Paul exhorts us *to rejoyce in the Lord*. He said, *In the Lord*, not *in the Devil*. And St. Jerome on the same Subject says, "Some are Delighted with the Satisfaction of this World, some with the *Circus*, and some with the *Theatre*. But the *Psalmist* Commands every good Man *to delight himself in the Lord*."

These Precepts of the *Psalmist*, and the *Apostle*, are indeed the highest Duty of Christianity. But as we are but Men, 'tis a Duty too weighty to lye upon Humane Weakness, without any Intervals of some lighter Alleviations of the Cares and Labours of Life. Were Life to be intirely divided between the *Prayer-book*, the *Psalter* and the *Plough*, Rejoycing in God is that Exercise of Piety, requiring so Intent and Exalted a Meditation, that the weakness of Humane Nature would hardly be



able to keep up the Soul on so sublime a flight, without flagging her Wing, and Devotion so severely tyed to the Altar, I fear, would make but a very lean Sacrifice.

But both the *Psalmist* and the *Apostle* did not extend this Command to Rejoyce *only* in the Lord; no, their Commission reach'd not so far, they neither did, nor could deliver such a Precept, because their Lord and Master, our Blessed *Saviour* himself, would have refuted them.

For to give us an Instance, that Temporal and Worldly Mirth and Rejoycing has received a Warrant of Authority even from Christ himself; we need but read how Christ and his Mother were called to the Marriage in *Cana of Galilee*, where his Beginning of Miracles was turning Water into Wine.

Here we may Innocently and Modestly presume to suppose, at this Marriage Festival, when their Wine, as the Text expresses, was drank out, that Cheerefulness and Mirth went round with the Glass, not Spiritual Mirth, for that wants not the Juice of the Grape. And here undoubtedly our Saviour would neither have been himself a Guest at the Feast, or heightned the Mirth at the Price



Price of a Miracle, had either a Cheerful Glas, a Sociable Rejoycing, or the Innocent Delights of Life been Sinful and Unlawful. Nor can the End of this Miracle, exprest in the Text, *viz. The manifesting forth his Glory, and making his Disciples believe on him*, be any Argument to weaken my Assertion. For 'twere even Impiety to suggest, That our Saviour could want Occasion or Opportunities of Exerting the God, to need a *poor* Choice for the Ground of a Miracle.

Next, let us examine one of the most Capital Offences of Dramatick Poetry arraign'd both by the Philosophers, Fathers of the Church, and the Son of the Church, Mr. Collier, *viz. The Raising the Passions, &c.*

Here we'll begin with *Tragedy*. *Tragedy* indeed does raise the Passions; and its chief work is to raise *Compassion*: For the great Entertainment of *Tragedy*, is the moving that tenderest and noblest Humane Passion, *Pity*. And what is it we pity there, but the Distresses, Calamities and Ruins of *Honour, Loyalty, Fidelity or Love, &c.* represented in some True or Fictitious, Historick or Romantick Subject of the Play? Thus *Virtue*, like *Religion* by its *Martyrdom*, is rendered more shining by its *Sufferings*, and the



Impression we receive from *Tragedy*, is only making us in Love with *Virtue*, (for Pity is a little Kin to Love) and out of Love with Vice ; for at the same time we pity the suffering *Virtue*, it raises our Aversions and Hate to the Treachery or Tyranny in the *Tragedy*, from whence and by whom that *Virtue* suffers. How often is the good Actor (as for Instance, the *Jago* in the *Moor of Venice*, or the Countess of *Nottingham* in the *Earl of Essex*) little less than Curst for Acting an Ill Part ? Such a Natural Affection and Commiseration of *Innocence* does *Tragedy* raise, and such an Abhorrence of *Villany*.

And that this is truly the Entertainment of *Tragedy*, we come on purpose to see *Virtue* made Lovely, and *Vice* made Odious. That Expectation brings us to the Play ; and if we find not that very Expectation answer'd, instead of any satisfactory Delight we receive, or any Applause we return, we Explode and Hiss our Entertainment ; the Play sinks, and the Performance is lost, and we come away with this Disrelish as to think both our Money and Time ill spent.

'Tis true a Character that has not all the Perfections of true Honour or Innocence,  
nay



may a Vicious one sometimes may move Compassion. But then 'tis not the Vice or Blemishes in the Character that moves that Pity. For Instance in the *Orphan*, we pity the Vicious and Libertine *Polydore* that lyes with his Brother's Wife. But when do we pity him? When he's touch'd with that sense and horror of his Guilt, that he gives up his Life, (pick's a feign'd Quarrel with the Injur'd *Castalio*, and runs upon his Sword) to Expiate. 'Tis not the *Criminal* but the *Penitent*, the *Virtue* not *Vice* in the Character moves the Compassion.

Thus we pity *Timon of Athens*, not as the Libertine nor Prodigal, but the *Misanthropos*: When his Manly and Generous Indignation against the Universal *Ingratitude* of Mankind makes him leave the World and fly the Society of Man; when his open'd Eyes and recollected Virtue can stand the Temptation of a Treasure he found in the Woods, enough to purchase his own Estate again: When all this glittering Mine of Gold has not Charm to bribe him back into a hated World, to the Society of *Villains, Hypocrites* and *Flatterers*. We pity the *Evandra* too, his Mistress, not for the Vice and Frailty in her Character, but for that Generous Gratitude to the Founder of her Fortunes, that she sells all she has in the World,



World, and brings it all in Jewels to relieve the Distresses of *Timon*; and what heightens our Pity, is, that she follows him, not for a Criminal or wanton Conversation with him: Nay, what's yet greater, she can quit all the Vanities and Temptations of Life, and with an equal Contempt of Jewels and Gold, can embrace his voluntary Poverty, eat Roots, drink Water, and dye with him.

However, if the pitying Part is not the main Offence, there's another more dreadful Danger from Tragedy. For as his *Minutius Felix*, upon that Subject, tells us, "Sometimes a Luscious Actor shall whine  
"you into Love, and give the Disease that  
"he Counterfeits.

Mr. *Collier* himself is more at large upon this Play-house Danger: For he concludes his Book with this last Argument to prove the Unlawfulness of Plays, *viz.* "Were  
"the Stage in a condition to wipe off  
"all her other Imputations, there are two  
"Things behind which would stick upon  
"them, and have an ill Effect upon the Au-  
"dience. The first is their dilating so much  
"upon the Argument of *Love*. The Sub-  
"ject is Treated Home, and in the most  
"tender and passionate manner imagina-  
"ble



“ ble, &c. These Love Representations,  
 “ oftentimes call up the Spirits and set them  
 “ at Work. The Play is Acted over again  
 “ in the sense of *Fancy*, and the first Imita-  
 “ tion becomes a Model. Love has generally  
 “ a *Party within*; and when the Wax is pre-  
 “ par’d the Impression is easily made. Thus  
 “ the Disease of the Stage grows catching.  
 “ It throws its Amours among the Com-  
 “ pany; and forms these Passions, when it  
 “ does not find them, &c.

“ I don’t say the Stage Fells *All* before  
 “ them, and disables the whole Audience:  
 “ ’Tis a hard Battle where none escapes.  
 “ However their *Triumphs* and their *Tro-*  
 “ *phies* are unspeakable. Neither need we  
 “ much wonder at the matter. They are  
 “ dangerously prepar’d for Conquest, and  
 “ Empire. There’s Nature, and Passion, and  
 “ Life, in all the Circumstances of their  
 “ *Action*. Their Declamation, their Mein,  
 “ their Gestures and their Equipage, are  
 “ moving and significant. Now when  
 “ the Subject is agreeable, a lively Re-  
 “ presentation, and a passionate way of  
 “ Expression, make wild work, and have  
 “ a strong Force upon the Blood and Tem-  
 “ per.

I can



I cannot well understand what Mr. Collier means (and I fear, he don't over-well understand himself,) in all this last Paragraph. But perhaps he design'd it more for *Rapsody* than *Reason*; and so 'tis no great matter whether it be *Intelligible* or not. For all this *Nature, Passion, Life and Action; Declamation, Mien, Gesture, and Equipage* are purely the *Actors*, and by making such wild work in the Blood and Temper, and felling so many of the Audience before them, plainly tells us, That these unspeakable Triumphs and Trophies, Conquest and Empire are all the *Actors* and *Actresses*, and the Cupids Darts come all from their own Eyes and Charms, and consequently the Audiences captivated Hearts are all their own; the Enamour'd *Gentlemen* in the Pit, and the Gay *Ladies* in the Boxes, are these Victorious *Players*, most passionate humble Servants.

This *unspeakable* Play-house *Victory*, I am afraid is a-piece of News that wants Confirmation. For as to the *Men-Players*, I dare swear for 'em, that all the Feminine Trophies our *Triumphant* Young Fellows of both Play-Houses can boast, is not enough to buy them Sword-knots and Crevate-strings. And for the *Ladies of the Stage*, with all the advantage of Paint, Plume, and Candle-



Candle-light ; I do not hear they are so very over-stockt with Idolaters, or make any such general *Slaughter-work* amongst the Audience before them.

But for once, we'll wave this Interpretation of Mr. *Collier*, and screw his foremention'd Rapsody to the Sense of his *Minutius*, viz. That the Charms of the *Counterfeit* whining *Love*, separate from the Charms of the whining *Lover*, shall infuse a *True* Love-sick Disease into the Audience.

Now 'tis worth one's Pains to inquire by what wonderful Operation, and by what unaccountable Conveyance, this Counterfeit Disease must infuse the true Disease into the Audience. First, here's *Pygmalion's* Fable infinitely out-done ; for the *Pygmalion* here does not animate the Image, but the Image the *Pygmalion*. But let that pass.

How then must this Love-disease be contracted ! why, thus. Here's a Young Beautiful Actress on the Stage, we'll suppose, by Virtue of the Attracting Graces of Carriage, Movement, Address, Tendernefs, Languishment, and what not, shall make a Man fall in Love. In Love ! With whom ?  
not



not the Mistress of all these Attracting Graces; No, that's the natural Way of falling in Love, and that's none of the Operation here. Those Graces that in any other Woman but an Actress shall win Hearts for herself, shall here have a quite contrary Effect. You shall go off as cold as a Chaste *Joseph* to all these visible Charms and Charmer that gave you the Fire, and be all in a flame for some Body else. These are indeed unspeakable Stage-Triumphs and Trophies! Thus the Charms of one Woman wins a Heart for another. I have heard indeed of *Celadon's* kissing his Mistress upon another Woman's Lips, but that was nothing to this; He kiss'd his Mistress only in Imagination, but here the Lover is Captivated in true Earnest.

Really the Ladies in our Boxes stand highly obliged to the Women in the Play-house, and are in all Honour bound to support the Stage. For instead of exercising any Dint of Charms of their own to get Lovers, they keep their Deputies on the Stage to do the Drudgery of Conquest, and carry off the Prize themselves.

One thing I would willingly advise Mr. *Collier*, viz. to sit Chair-man himself at a Natural



Natural Philosophy Lecture, and read a little Learnedly upon this unspeakable way of catching the Disease of Love: Otherwise I am afraid 'tis such a weak-faith'd Age we live in, that all his Metaphysical Divinity will hardly convince 'em of this Superlative Operation of Love.

Besides, if his *Minutius*, and all the other Primitive Doctors much of the same Opinion, could plead Infallibility, and their Argument were Unquestionable: Nevertheless they would hardly carry Mr. Collier's Cause. For if whining Love is this unspeakable Conqueror, and Love never whines but in our Tragedies, where the Virtuous Distress'd Love is the Darling in the Play; Consequently if a Man should catch the Disease from a *Jaffeir* and *Belvidira*, or a *Marius* and *Lavinia*, or any such Character, such an Infection would rather recommend then condemn the Stage, not corrupt but reform the Audience, by refining that Noble Passion, so depraved in this Age, from Coldness and Libertinism, to Fidelity and Virtue.

Well, if the Infection from Tragedy strikes not altogether so mortal, let us examine the more pestilential Air of Comedy,  
and



and search if possible, which way the more fatal Poison enters there.

First, then for the subject of Comedy, 'tis the Representation of Humane Life in a lower class of Conversation; we visit the Palace for Tragedy, and range the Town for Comedy, *viz.* for the Follies, the Vices, the Vanities and the Passions of Mankind, which we meet with every Day. In short, the Comedian, may join with the Satyrift,

*Quicquid agunt Homines, Votum, Timor,  
Ira, Voluptas,  
Gaudia, Discursus, nostri est farrago libelli.*

But to confine our selves into as narrow a compass as we can, under these three Heads, *viz.* Folly, Knavery, and Love, we may not improperly Rank the whole Characters in Comedy.

The Fools we may divide into three Classes, *viz.* the Cudden, the Cully and the Fop. The Cudden a Fool of God Almighty's making; the Cully, of Man's making; and the Fop, of his own making.

For the first of these Fools the Cudden, the Sr. Martin Marral, or the Sr. Arthur Addle, &c.  
I hope



I hope the Audience is in no danger of taking Taint from these Characters in Comedy; the *made* Fool may be a catching Disease, but not the *born* one.

For the second, one of the *made* Fools, the *Cully*. Here's the least danger of a Contagion that way; for that Disease is rather cured than catch'd from the Stage. The Country 'Squire or the Knight, the Prodigal or the Bubble, &c. either Cozen'd by Sharpers, Spungers, Dicers and Bullies; or Jilted by Jades, or snared into any other Ruinous Folly of this kind; In exposing these Characters, the Stage does the Work of a *Philosophy School*, it carries the whole Force of *Precept* and *Instruction* to warn unwary Youth from the Snares and Quick-sands of Debauchery. It points him out the several Harpies that devour him, and instead of taking Taint from the Stage, the very sight of the Plague-spots not gives, but expels the Contagion.

For the third Fool, the Fop; this indeed of all Fools is the most incorrigible. For the Cudden wants no good Will to be wiser, and would learn Wit if he were capable of it. The Cully indeed is capable of being taught Wit, but seldom learns it, till he has too well paid for his Learning; sometimes

G

per-



perhaps at no less Price than his Ruin, when he buys the Knowledge of finding himself a Chouse, by the same Experimental Wisdom as Sir *Philip Sydney's* Painter learnt to draw Battle-work from *Musidorus*, viz. when his Hands were cut off. But of all Fools the Fop is the blindest; his Faults are his Perfections, whilst he looks upon himself as the compleatest of Courtiers and Gentlemen; and by that means perhaps, tho' never to be cured of the Fondness he has for his own tawdry Picture; however, in all Places in the World he will never play the *Narcissus* at the *Theatres*, nor fall much in Love with his own painted Face, in a Sir *Courtly's* or a Lord *Foppington's* Looking-glass. This I will positively say, He that does not bring the Fop to the Play-house, shall never carry it from thence. And in all the Stage *Fop-pictures*, the Play-house bids so fair for mending that Fool too, that if the good Will fails, the Fault's not in the Mirror, the Hand that holds it, or the Light 'tis sets at, but the perverse and deprav'd Opticks that cannot see themselves there.

As to the second Class, &c. the *Villain*, the *Usurer*, the *Cheat*, the *Pandar*, the *Bully*, the *Flatterer*, and all the rest of their Brethren in Iniquity; there's so little Danger from all their Stage-Pictures, that there's  
here



here no fear of playing the *Narcissus* in the Glas; and therefore we'll pass to the lewd Love-Distempers in Comedy; and see what Mortality the more dangerous Contagion and Malignity from these Counterfeit Diseases may produce.

First then, to shew how very little Influence the Stage-Characters and Representations of Whoredom and Debauchery carry to the Temptation of the Audience, or the Corruption of Manners; or to make Lewdness look lovely even to the very Practisers of it: Let us consider, that, he that loves Whoredom, loves the Harlot purely as the Harlot, the Sin when it comes singly, in *puris naturalibus*, with as little a Train at the heels of it as possible. For no Man loves the Levity and Fickleness of the Harlot, the falseness of her Oaths and Tears, the profuseness of her Vanity, the insults of her Pride, or the mercynariness of her Lust. Every Man, nay, the greatest Libertine himself would have a Mistress, (if such a Creature of that kind can be found in the World) that brings Love for Love. The Man that loves the Wanton, loves not the 'Traitors nor the Hypocrite; The Syren may be lovely, and her Musick pleasing; but we are not over-fond of her Enchantments, her Rocks nor her Quick sands.



The same Argument holds on the other side: The *Dalilah* her self loves a Character of Honour and Fidelity in her Paramour, not the looseness of the Rover and the Libertine: The finest Gentlemen, one of them in all our Comedies; a *Dorimant* himself is no very tempting Character for a Young Lady to fall in Love with. The veriest Wanton of that Sex is as much for *Monopoly* as the other; they care not for half Hearts, a Gallant divided between a *Lovet*, a *Bellinda*, and a *Harriot*. 'Tis true, we may see a mad *Florimel* upon a Stage in Love with a wild *Celadon*, for wildness sake; but that *Rara avis in Terris*, is hardly to be found off of the Stage.

Now as the Lovers, I mean the vicious Characters of Love, in our Comedies are generally (I might venture to say, all of 'em) set forth with some of these foremention'd Corruptions, *viz.* Levity, Hypocrisie, Infidelity, &c. we meet the Jilt, the Rover, the Libertine, false Vows, false Oaths, Love for Money, Treason for Love, or some other accumulated Sin, more than the bare Wanton, in all of them: All these therefore are so far from ensnaring or seducing the unwary Auditor, those inviting Charmers off of the Stage by what he sees presented upon it; that they are rather the Objects of his Aversion.

The



The Objects of his Aversion! Have a care what you say : no, no, says Dr. Collier at my Elbow, don't mistake your self *Lactantius* his Testimony in his *Divine Institutions*, Dedicated to *Constantine* the Great, shall confute that Argument.

“ The Debauching of Virgins, and the Amours of Strumpets are the Subject of Comedy. And here the Rule is, the more Rhetorick the more Mischief, and the best Poets are the worst Commonwealths-men. For the Harmony and Ornament of the Composition, serves only to recommend the Argument, to fortifie the Charme, and engage the Memory. Let us avoid therefore these Diversions least somewhat of the Malignity seize us.

Well, to answer both the Primitive Dr. and the Modern one together, I fancy some very good and substantial Reasons, and Proof may be produc'd, That the Ornament and Composition, the Poet and Rhetorick may make these Amours of Strumpets, Debauchery, &c. a delectable Entertainment to the Auditor that hears them upon the Stage; and yet neither recommend the Argument, nor leave any Charm to



corrupt him, or Malignity to seize him ; but rather the quite Contrary.

First then, why is the Jilt, the Strumpet, or the Adultress, an Entertaining Character in Comedy ? Why ! Because those very Characters afford the most ample Matter in the Conduct of the Play, to gain one of the great Ends of Comedy, and that which chiefly attracts the Audience thither, *viz. Mirth*. It gives Occasion, Matter and Subject to create the Laughter of the Audience.

The Jilt for Instance, with her Windings and Turnings, her Wheedles to draw in her *Cully*, and her Artifices to Secure and Manage him ; The false Wife with her Faunings and Flattery, to lull the Husbands Jealousie. Her Starts and her Fears at every Danger and Alarme, her whole Arts to cover the Hypocrite ; and her Surprise and Confusion at her Detection and Discovery ( for Comedy it self does that Dramatick Justice to bring her to shame, if no other punishment ) as they afford plot design , and contrivance , &c. are the highest Jest of Comedy. And 'tis for that, and that only Charme that these Characters find so general a Reception on the Stage. And that this is truly the only  
Charme,



Charme, is manifest from the success of those Comedies. 'Tis not the Lewdness it self in a Vicious Character, that recommends it to the Audience, but the witty Turnes, Adventures and Surprizes in those Characters that give it Reception. For without this, the Play drops and dies.

And to shew you, that a Vicious Character, *Quatenus* as Vicious, is no Darling of the Audience; but that the *Mirth* only that it raises, is the Delight of Comedy; let an Ingenious Author raise the same *Mirth* upon a Virtuous Foundation, and that Comedy shall be as hug'd a Favourite as the other. For Instance in a *Sr. Solomon Single* and several other Comedies, where the Love is all Virtuous. In fine, 'tis the Wit of the Composition, not the Vice in the Composition, gives Life to the Comedy. A dull Representation of Vice or Virtue, shall be equally Hiss'd off the Stage. And tho' even Vice and Debauchery in a Theatrick Representation may find Applause, 'tis never the *more* a Closet Darling for being a Stage one. Nay rather one the contrary, much *less* the Darling of the Closet. For the publick exposure of Debauchery, with all her Treacheries, Wills, Delusions, Impostures and Snares, has more of the Antidote than the Poyson.



There's a great deal of difference betwixt likeing the Picture and the Substance. A Man may be very well pleas'd with a Forest work piece of Tapestry, with the Lyons, the Bears, and the Wolves, &c. but not over fond of their Company in Flesh and Blood; and consequently the very worst Jilt may be the Minion upon the Stage, and, as I said before, our Aversion off it.

Nay, I dare be so bold, as to tell this angry Gentleman, as highly as he Resents the Cuckolding of Aldermen and Quality in our Comedies, that I could find him Matter of very good Instruction, from a Character of this kind, in a very Ingenious Author, though not much in Mr. *Colliers* Favour. For Example, If the Reverend Gentlemen of the Fur would be but half as kind to a *Play-house* as a *Pin-makers-Hall*, and step for Edification, but so far towards *Westminster*, as to see the *Old Batchelor*; I doubt not but an *Isaac Fondlewife* would be a very seasonable Monitor to Reverend City Sixty, to warn against the Marrying to Sixteen. Nor can I think it such a scandalous part of the Dramatick Poet; but rather a true Poetick Justice, to expose the unreasonableness of such Superannuated Dotage, that can blindly think or hope, that a bare Chain of Gold has Magick enough in the Circle to  
bind



bind the Fidelity of so unequal a Match, a Match so contrary to the Holy Ordinance of Matrimony; and an Itch at those Years that deserves the severest Lash of the Stage. And if an Author would pick out such a Character for a little Stage Satyr, where can he meet with it but amongst the City or Court Quality? Such Inequality of Marriages are rarely to be found, but under the Roofs of Honour; for so Antiquated a Lover, (the least he can do) must bring a Coach and Six, to carry off such a Young Bride.

One thing mightily offends this Divine Author, *viz.* That our Modern Plays make our Libertines of both Sexes, Persons of Figure and Quality, Fine Gentlemen and Ladies of Fashion, a fault utterly unpractis'd by the Ancient Poets: *For Terence and Plautus his Strumpets are little People.*

Now this is so far from a fault in our Comedies, that there's a necessity of those Characters, and a Vertue in that Choice. For as the greatest and best part of our Audience are Quality, if we would make our Comedies Instructive in the exposing of Vice, we must not lash the Vices at *Wapping* to mend the Faults at *Westminster*.

And as the Instructive Design of the  
Play



Play must look as well to the Cautioning of Virtue from the ensnaring Conversation of Vice, as the lashing of Vice it self. Thus the Court Libertine must be a Person of Wit and Honour, and have all the accomplishments of a Fine Gentleman. (The Court Ladies receive no Visits from Ruffians.) Besides there needs no cautioning against a *Don John*; every Fool would run from a Devil with a *visible* Cloven-foot. That Devil therefore must have all the Face and Charms of *Honour*, when it would seduce *Honour*; and therefore 'tis those very Pictures the Stage must present.

The *Plain-dealer* speaks very significantly to this purpose, and very much justifies this Choice of Characters for Plays. *Who betrays you, Over-reaches or Cheats you, but your Friend? Your Enemy is not trusted with your Affairs. Who violates the Honour of your Wife, but your Friend? Your Enemy is not admitted into your Family.*

Who therefore are those Dangerous Friends of *Quality*, but their Bosome Conversation? and who that Conversation but their *Equality*; and therefore for an Instructive Draught for Comedy, who so proper to fit to her Pencil as *Quality*?

Besides



Besides, Comedy opens a wrong Door to let in a Taint of Lust. Lust is the product of Thought and Meditation; not the Child of Laughter. The Auditor must have a much more serious Face than he wears at a Light Comedy, to take so deep and so fatal an Impression.

Nay, if we could suppose that the Jest of a Comedy shall open his Laughing Mouth so wide as to let down a Lust like a Witches Ball of Pinns; or rather that a speaking Image in a Comedy shall have the same conceptionary Force upon us, as the *European* Picture at the *Mauritanean* Princesses Beds-feet, that made her bring forth a White Child; Yet still the Picture in Comedy, like that in the Ladies Bed-Chamber, does not hang long enough for any such Conceptionary Impression: For besides twenty other equally diverting Objects in the same Comical Lantscape; here's the whole Stage new furnish'd every Day; and a new Collection of Painting for the next Entertainment. The *Venus* yesterday is the *Diana* to day, the *Juno* to morrow, all a quite contrary set of Imagery. And if the *Movement*, the *Gesture*, the *Equipage*, have any such dangerous Force, here's not one Movement one Day but what's quite alter'd the next; and so Change upon Change, &c.  
so



Play must look as well to the Cautioning of Virtue from the ensnaring Conversation of Vice, as the lashing of Vice it self. Thus the Court Libertine must be a Person of Wit and Honour, and have all the accomplishments of a Fine Gentleman. (The Court Ladies receive no Visits from Ruffians.) Besides there needs no cautioning against a *Don John*; every Fool would run from a Devil with a *visible* Cloven-foot. That Devil therefore must have all the Face and Charms of *Honour*, when it would seduce *Honour*; and therefore 'tis those very Pictures the Stage must present.

The *Plain-dealer* speaks very significantly to this purpose, and very much justifies this Choice of Characters for Plays. *Who betrays you, Over-reaches or Cheats you, but your Friend? Your Enemy is not trusted with your Affairs. Who violates the Honour of your Wife, but your Friend? Your Enemy is not admitted into your Family.*

Who therefore are those Dangerous Friends of *Quality*, but their Bosome Conversation? and who that Conversation but their *Equality*; and therefore for an Instru-ctive Draught for Comedy, who so proper to fit to her Pencil as *Quality*?

Besides



Besides, Comedy opens a wrong Door to let in a Taint of Lust. Lust is the product of Thought and Meditation; not the Child of Laughter. The Auditor must have a much more serious Face than he wears at a Light Comedy, to take so deep and so fatal an Impression.

Nay, if we could suppose that the Jest of a Comedy shall open his Laughing Mouth so wide as to let down a Lust like a Witches Ball of Pinns; or rather that a speaking Image in a Comedy shall have the same conceptionary Force upon us, as the *European* Picture at the *Mauritanean* Princesses Bedsfeet, that made her bring forth a White Child; Yet still the Picture in Comedy, like that in the Ladies Bed-Chamber, does not hang long enough for any such Conceptionary Impression: For besides twenty other equally diverting Objects in the same Comical Lantscap; here's the whole Stage new furnish'd every Day; and a new Collection of Painting for the next Entertainment. The *Venus* yesterday is the *Diana* to day, the *Juno* to morrow, all a quite contrary set of Imagery. And if the *Movement*, the *Gesture*, the *Equipage*, have any such dangerous Force, here's not one Movement one Day but what's quite alter'd the next; and so Change upon Change, &c.  
so



so that in the infinite Variety of the Stage, here's no dwelling upon one darling Object to run any such Danger of Infection: For the whole Stage-Mercury is too volatile to fix.

But if the Stage had any such Magical Power, (for no Natural one will reach it) over poor weak Mortality to Enchant, Corrupt, Confound, or what else Mr. *Collier* pleases; we'll try the Experiment but in one Play: For Instance, we'll take one of the loosest, and to answer the Temptation, one of the loveliest of those Libertine Pictures, Mr. *Dorimant*, we named before; and granting the Ladies Love-Proof against such a Libertine Character; we'll suppose some Young mad Spark as much Charm'd with this lovely *Dorimant*, as this Divine Speculator can fancy him, and consequently shall catch the true Disease from this amiable Counterfeit; pray which of all the *Ignes fatui*, in Mr. *Dorimant's* Character shall be the misleading Fire? For here in one Play, in the Presentation of poor three Hours, we have, First, Mr. *Dorimant's* Cooling Intrigue, all his retreating Steps from the tiresome Embraces of an old Mistress, Madam *Lovet*; next his start of Love, an Amour, *en passant*, into the Arms of *Belinda*; and to conclude the Character, his last honourable



nourable Passion for the Virtuous Mistress *Harriot*. Now I say, to which of all these three, shall this mad Sparks *Tarantula* dance? (For to all three together is a little too mad a Gallop:) If to the first: And consequently (to Copy from the Original) he goes home weaned from an old Darling Sin, and turns off some Bosom *Dalilah*; if our Spark catches Fire from this part of the wild *Dorimant*, I hope, our Ecclesiastical Censor will find no Sin in so harmless an Infection. If to the second: If he takes Fire from *Dorimant*'s Frailty with *Belinda*; there indeed he may want some Church-Buckets to quench him; 'tis high time for all Hands for his Conversion. But if he fums up the Character, and Copies the whole reforming Rover, quits, like *Dorimant*, his old four Grapes and forbidden Fruit, for the Charming Sweets of a Chaste *Harriot*, and finishes the Picture in the Comedy, in an honourable Wedlock Passion; then I hope this Reverend Corrigidore of unruly Love, will remit the Lash, and hold his whip Hand.

Thus you see what *Boutefeu* does Mr. *Collier* make of a poor Player, that with the Intoxication of a three Hours Tale of Love, shall put a Man not only into a whole Nights pain of it, but possibly to a total  
Cor-



Corruption of his whole Mass of Blood, and the very enflaming of an unquenchable Feavor. What *Quixot* Wind-mills can an Enthusiast raise, and then Battle the Gyant of his own Creation!

The second of the two Things he has to object against the Stage, is, “ Their Encouraging Revenge. What is more common than Duells and Quarrelling in their *Characters* of Figure? Those Practices which are infamous in Reason, Capital in Law, and damnable in Religion, are the Credit of the Stage, &c. But this Subject he tells you he had discours’d of before,—*viz.* p. 67. Our Saviour (he says) tells us we must forgive *until seventy times Seven*. That is, we must never be tired out of Clemency and good Nature. He has taught us to pray for the Forgiveness of our own Sins, only upon the condition of forgiving others: Here is no Exception upon the Repetition of the Fault or the Quality of the Provocation:

I shall not dispute upon Our Saviours Precepts of *Forgiveness*, but acknowledge it possibly, the highest Characteristick of Christianity, and a Perfection that comes nearest to the Great Original of *Mercy*, that deliver’d



liver'd it. But to let my Reader see upon what stress, Mr. *Collier* enforces his Scriptural Arguments, we'll Examine, what Consequence must follow the Universal Stretch of a Divine Precept.

By these Divine Commands of our Saviour to the Literal Extent of the Precept: In the first place I must neither Sue in Law nor Equity for the Recovery of a Just Right, or the Reparation of any wrong whatever. For the Prosecution of Law is directly opposite to this Forgiving Doctrine.

So here's *Westminster-hall* shut up immediately. Nay, if the Precept of God obliges me to the same Resignation of my Coat to the Thief that has Rob'd me of my Cloak, I am so far from Licens'd or Authoriz'd to take that Christian Revenge against the Offender, *viz.* the Prosecution of publick Justice upon him; that the very Christian Judge, instead of Arraigning the Robber, the Cheat or the Felon at the Bar, for the Breach of our Humane Law; should rather stand obliged to Arraign the Prosecutor for the Breach of a Divine one. So here's the *Old-Bayly* shut up too. Nay here's the very Law it self Arraign'd, as little less than Antichristian for punishing that Injury,  
which



which the exprefs Law of God, even seventy seven times over, obliges us to forgive. I believe this Author as bold a Sermonist, and as hardy a Hero of the *Rockst*, as his *Perswasive to Consideration* has prov'd him ; Nevertheless has hardly Courage enough to Preach this Doctrine to the Gentlemen of *St. Stephens Chappel*.

Nay, by this forgiving unrevenging Doctrine push'd home, here's *Passive Obedience* and *Non-Resistance* set up with a Vengeance, not only in submission to *Sovereign Tyranny* to Lord it over us, but even to every little Diminitive Arbitrary Thief and Ruffain, the Lord and Master of my Purse, my House, my Coat, &c. for at this rate of Forgiveness, here's a General Goal-Delivery, *Newgate* Doors set open, Oppression, Injustice, Theft, Rapine and Villany let loose, and the *Homo Homini Lupus* at free Discretion to Spoil, Ravage, and Over-run the whole World, whilst the meek, humble, resigning, forgiving Christian is the tame bleating Sheep before him.

The Gentleman Thief at this rate will be as great as an *Almanzor* himself, and may Plume in his Vanity.

*I am*



*I am as free as Nature first made Man,  
Before the servitude of Laws began;  
When wild in Woods the Noble Savage ran.*

In short, how can any Man of Sense extort such rigorous Constructions of the Divine Commands; as if the God of Concord and Peace could set up a Doctrine of Christianity utterly destructive, not only to all Civil Government, but even to Human Society it self.

Mr. Collier is almost as angry at the Vanity, as at the greater Sins of the Stage; and passes his Vote for their Exclusion, even for that Offence alone. But if he'll make a fair distributive Justice to all other Vanities, I am afraid he'll set up another Doctrine almost as pernicious to Government as the first. For if the Vanity-shop the Playhouse must go down; pray let the Vanity-shops the Embroiderer, the Laceman, the Featherman, the Ribband-Weaver, *cum multis aliis* come in for a snack; for there's not one of all those Professions but is utterly useless to the real wants of Life, and perhaps deals in the more dangerous Vanities; for the Stage Vanities may only raise an Innocent Tear or a Laugh or so; but these o-

H ther



ther Vanities are very often the unhappy Nurses of Pride, a more capital Fault.

I confess, a good stretch of this Argument for the General Retrenchment of Vanities would make a terrible City slaughter, and almost as many Beggars as the stretch of the other would Thieves: However, 'tis but Dr. Collier's Preaching them another healing Text, being a second *Perswasive*, to *Poverty*, like his First, to *Consideration*, to alleviate their sorrows, and soften their losses, by assuring them, *That the Poor shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.*

---

## *The Remarks upon King Arthur and Amphitryon Examined.*

**T**O come now to his particular Remarks upon the Modern Plays, I shall begin by Seniority, viz. with Mr. Dryden, and examine his Offences in that most capital Sin of Profaneness and Blasphemy.

He



He tells you in *King Arthur*, “ Mr. Dryden makes a strange jumble and hodgepodge of Matters, *Angels, Cupids, Syrens, and Devils, &c.* the Hell of *Heathenism*, and the Hell of *Revelation, &c.* And why are Truth and Fiction, Heathenism and Christianity, the most Serious and the most Trifling Things blended together, and thrown into one form of Diversion? Why is all this done unless it be to ridicule the whole, and make one as incredible as the other?

Not at all; Learned Sir but because his betters have done it before him; and Mr. *Dryden* thinks it no scorn to follow his elder Brother *Gamaliel Mr. Milton* in his *Paradise Lost*.

*Four Infernal Rivers that disgorge  
Into the Burning Lake their Baleful Streams;  
Abhorred Styx, the Flood of deadly Hate,  
Sad Acheron, of sorrow black and deep;  
Cocytus named of Lamentation loud,  
Hear'd in the woful Stream, fierce Phlegeton,  
Whose Waves of Torrent Fire enflame the  
Rage, &c. Parad. Lost, B. 2.*

Is not here the Fictitious Rivers of *Acheron, Cocytus, Styx, and Phlegeton*, running as directly into the *Revelation Lake of Brimstone,*



stone, as Mr. Collier is running out of Sense, Reason, and Good Nature, to charge such an innocent *Poetica Licentia* with so barbarous a design, as to *ridicule the Revelation, and render Christianity, and all that's Serious and Sacred, incredible.*

But to proceed with our Remarker,  
 “ Mr. Dryden’s Airy and Earthy Spirits  
 “ Discourse of the first state of Devils, of  
 “ the chief of their Revolt, their Punish-  
 “ ment and Impostures. This, Mr. Dry-  
 “ den, (he says) very Religiously calls a *Fai-  
 ry way of Writing, which depends wholly on  
 “ the force of Imagination.* Epist. Ded. What  
 “ then, is the Fall of Angels a Romance?  
 “ Has it no Basis of Truth, nothing to sup-  
 “ port it but strength of Fancy, and Poetick  
 “ Invention! After he had mentioned Hell,  
 “ Devils, &c. and given us a sort of Bible  
 “ Description of those formidable Things,  
 “ &c. I am surprized to hear him call it a  
 “ Fairy kind of Writing. Is the History of  
 “ *Tophet* no better proved than that of *Stryx*;  
 “ Is the Lake of *Brimstone*, and that of  
 “ *Phlegeton* alike dreadful; and have we as  
 “ much reason to believe the Torments of  
 “ *Titius* and *Prometheus*, as those of the  
 “ Devils and Damn’d? These are lamenta-  
 “ ble Consequences! And yet I cannot see  
 “ how the Poet can avoid them.

Not



[ Not see? no, 'tis impossible he should,  
who so blind as ——— ]

“ But setting aside the Dedication, the  
“ Representation it self is scandalously irre-  
“ ligious, &c. To see Hell thus play'd with  
“ is a mighty Refreshment to a lewd Con-  
“ science, and a byass'd Understanding; it  
“ heartens the young Libertine, and con-  
“ firms the well-wishers to Atheism, and  
“ makes Vice bold and enterprizing; such  
“ Diversions serve to dispel the gloom, and  
“ gild the horrors of the Shades below,  
“ and are a sort of ensurance against Dam-  
“ nation. One would think these Poets  
“ went upon a certainty, and could demon-  
“ strate a Scheme of Infidelity,

Thus he runs on for almost Forty Lines  
more, all upon this Head. I would not  
have made so long a Quotation, only to  
shew my Reader what a *fehu* Champion of  
Religion he is, and how fast and how far  
he can drive at a breath. To give him his  
due, he has a mighty Copiousness of Words;  
and to do him right, in the use he makes of  
'em, he's always as liberal as he is rich. I  
remember an Author that tells us, *Words*  
*are the Wise Man's Counters, and the Fool's*  
*ready Money.* Now, if this Learned Ma-  
ster of Arts and Language, shall be mistaken  
in



in his Charge against Mr. *Dryden's* Epistle Dedicatory, and Mr. *Dryden's* *Fairy Writing*, upon full Examination, instead of so frightful a Goblin, should prove but an innocent harmless Spright, and consequently all this effusion of Rhetorick should be prodigally thrown away in waste; However, this plain dealing Author gives him that comfort, *viz.* that his *Silver Eloquence* is all current *Sterling*, and not gilt Brass.

Well then, to give Mr. *Dryden's* Fairys a little Examination.

Because Mr. *Dryden* allusively, and very emphatically so, calls his description of Hell, and discourse of Devils, &c. a *Fairy way of Writing*, and as such, it depends upon the force of *Imagination*, that therefore he says, ( or means it ) that the Subject is Fairy Land he writes upon; that Hell is but Phantom; the Fall of Angels, Romance; and Damnation but Chimera; for a Fairy way of writing, our Author tells you, can be nothing but a *History of Fiction*, a Subject of Imaginary Beings, such as never had any Existence in Time or Nature. Good Heaven! How perversly does this angry Gentleman Scribble! If the Infernal Powers are invisible, the Devils incorporeal Spirits, nay, the very locality of Hell it self, and the materiality



materiality of the avenging Flames, are Things disputable amongst the most Learned Theologists. And if a discourse of Hell or Devils, with this Gentleman's leave, is a Subject that a Poet may presume to handle, (his leave, indeed, we ought to beg in this case; for if treating a *Mahomet* or *Musti* too boldly, by this Author's *Innuendo's* is a Profanation of the true Divinity, who knows but an intrusion into the Affairs of Hell, by the same rate of Presumption, may be peeping into a *Sanctum Sanctorum*) his leave therefore first beg'd, if Mr. *Dryden* may presume to speak a word or two of Hell, &c. (as there's scarce a Poet, either Divine or Profane that has not presumed upon the same subject; ) pray let me ask this Theological Critick, if a Poetical Draught or Imagery of Hell and Devils, though drawn as near the Life as the whole Bible Light can set them, and done by the ablest Master skill of Man, can be any thing but a piece of *Fairy pencil Work*, all the Colours, the Features, all by the force of imagination. For how can incorporeal and immaterial Beings be set forth to the Eye of Human Apprehension without an Array of form and shape; The Ghost must walk with a Body, the Fiend with a cloven Foot, or something of that kind; or the Apparition's lost: And what's all these but a Fairy Creation of Fan-



cy in the very propperest Name he could give it?

Nay, in much the same kind of Language does not the Scripture it self all along speak of Almighty God? What is the *Eye*, the *Ear*, the *Hand*, or the *Face* of God, the common Scripture-Phrase, any thing more than mere Notion; that Infinity and Omnipotence whom the Skys cannot contain, thus humbly drawn into that human like Figure in Miniature, purposely adapted to those short-sighted Opticks, the narrow capacity of Man.

But to return to our King *Arthur*, after above 20 lines of the serious Consideration of Eternal punishment, and the frightful State of the Damn'd, &c. Let us see, says he, "how Mr. *Dryden* represents those unhappy Spirits, and their place of abode! "Why very entertainingly! 'Those that "have a true taste for Atheism were never better Regaled. One would think by this "Play, that the Devils were mere *Mormoes* "and *Bugbears*, fit only to fright Children "and Fools. They rally upon Hell and "Damnation, with a great deal of Air and "Pleasantry; and appear like *Robin Good-fellow*, only to make the Company laugh. "*Philidel.* is called a *Puling Sprite*, and why



‘ why so? For this Pious Reason, because,

“ *He trembles at the yawning Gulf of Hell,*  
 “ *Nor dares approach the Flames, lest he should*  
 “ *His gaudy silken Wings.* ( *singe*  
 “ *He sighs when he should plunge a Soul in*  
   *Sulphur,*  
 “ *As with compassion toucht of foolish Man.*

The Answer is, *What a half Devil's he?*

“ you see how admirably it runs all upon  
 “ the Christian Scheme? Sometimes they  
 “ are half Devils, and sometimes hopeful  
 “ Devils, and what you please to make  
 “ sport with. *Grimbald* is afraid of being  
 “ *whoop'd through Hell* at his return, for mil-  
 “ carrying in his business. It seems there  
 “ is great leasure for Diversion! There's  
 “ *whooping in Hell*, instead of *Weeping and*  
 “ *Wailing.*

Our Author, you may observe, almost every where, lashes the Poets with a twig of their own Birch; his Arguments are every where all high flights of Rapture, only his Poetical Field of Fancy is a little too much over-run with the Savine and Wormwood; the rankness of the Soil is most Fruitful in those bitterer sort of Vegetives.

But



But in his last Remark, his Divine *Pegasus*, as high as he generally flies, is a little jaded. And perhaps his Railery in this place has more of the *Robin Goodfellow* than Mr. *Dryden's*; and I am certain has more reason to set us a Laughing. For I dare to Swear, he is that particular Dissenter from the General Opinion of every reasonable Judge, upon this Quotation from Mr. *Dryden*; that neither the Character of *Philidel*, though but Mr. *Dryden's* own *Fairy Creation*, or those *Pious Reasons*, as he calls 'em, the before quoted Lines, have any thing of that extraordinary Air of Pleasantry, to set either the Atheist agog, or the Company a tittering. And here I must desire him once again to read *Milton*, and tell us if his *Paradise Lost* has not character'd the whole Body of the Apostate Angels, animating each other into an Obstinacy and Emulation in Wickedness, glorying in the very cause of their Fall, their Rebellion against God, though in the midst of their Torments they suffer for't

*Better to Rule in Hell than Serve in Heaven.*

reproaching every Infernal faintness, daring each other in every new and hardier insult against God, and priding and pluming in every success in their Machinations against Hated Man.

Nay,



Nay, does not Cowley, in his Divine Poem of *Dauides* make his Infernal *Envy* (a copy from the Original) speak in the same Dialect.

———Dares none

*Attempt what becomes Furies : Are ye grown  
Benum'd with Fear or Virtues sprightless Cold,  
You who were once, I'm sure so brave and bold !  
Oh my ill chang'd Condition, oh my Fate !  
Did I lose Heaven for this !*

*At thy dread Anger the fixt World shall shake,  
And frighted Nature her own Laws forsake.  
Do thou but threat, loud Storms shall make re-  
ply,  
And Thunder eccho't to the trembling Sky.  
Heaven's gilded Troops shall flutter here and  
there,  
Leaving their boasted Songs tuned to a Sphear ;  
Nay, their GOD too--- for fear he did, when we  
Took noble Arms against his Tyranny ;  
So noble Arms, and in a Cause so great,  
That Triumphs we deserve for our defeat.  
There was a Day, oh might I see't again,  
Tho' he had fiercer Flames to thrust us in.*

Now with what egregious partiality does he tell us, that what has stood the test of an Age in both these shining Authors, has met an universal Reception and Applause, even



even in *Divine Poetry*, yet should now start up for such an impardonable Impiety, such a Titillation to Atheism, and what not.

*Nobis non licet esse tam disertis.*

Dramatick Poetry must not dare to handle so dangerous a *Noli me tangere*.

Hitherto Mr. *Collier* has only picqueer'd, skirmisht with a few stragling Blasphemies, but he makes a pitch Battle against the whole Play of *Amphitryon*.

And what does he infer from all this; but that Mr. *Dryden* is Blaspheming, even God himself. "To what purpose does *Jupiter* appear, but in the shape of *Jehovah*!" "Why are the incommunicable Attributes burlesqued, and *Omnipotence* applyed to Acts of Infamy! To what end can such horrible stuff as this serve, unless to expose the Notion, and extinguish the Belief of a Deity. The Perfections of God are himself; to ridicule his Attributes and Being, are but two Words for the same thing. These Attributes are bestow'd upon *Jupiter* with great Prodigality, and afterwards execrably outraged. The case being thus, the cover of an Idol is too thin a pretence to screen the Blasphemy.

Now



Now to wash off this stain, for 'tis a  
a black one, however 'tis but laid in Water  
Colours, Mr. Collier falsly charges Mr. Dry-  
den with dressing his *Jupiter* in the shape  
of *Jehovah*, for he gives him not one Trap-  
ping, Plume, or Feather, that the *Heathens*  
had not given him before.

But to call over his whole Black List of  
*Blasphemy* and *Debauchery* together, through  
that whole Play, *Jupiter* says in one place,

*Fate is, what I  
By Virtue of Omnipotence have made it:  
And Power Omnipotent can do no Wrong.*

*I swear, that were I Jupiter this Night,  
I would renounce my Heaven to be Amphi-  
tryon.*

*I would not lose this Night to be Master of  
the Universe,*

*A whole Eternity were well emploid.  
To love thy each perfection as I ought.*

*I would owe nothing to a Name so dull,  
As Husband is, but to a lover all.*

*That Name of Wife and Marriage  
Is Poison, to the dearest Joys of Love.*

*Whom*



*Whom more then Heav'n and all the World  
I love.*

*Mercury, he calls him---King of the Gods.*

*In what Form will your Almighty-ship be  
pleased to transform your self to Night.*

*You have need of all your Omnipotence, and  
all your Godship.*

*The Devil take Jupiter for inventing that  
hard hearted merciless Knobby Wood, a Crab-  
tree-Cudgel.*

Here indeed, Mr. Dryden has furnisht him  
(out of his own old Heathen Heraldry )  
with Omnipotence and Arbiter of Fate. But  
as to the Creator of Nature, all the Functi-  
ons of Providence in his hand, and his be-  
ing described with the Majesty of the true  
God, I can find nothing of that; But no  
great matter, Mr. Collier draws up his Plea  
like a Bill in Chancery, 'tis not given up-  
on Oath nor Honour, and half Truth, half  
Falsehood, is *Secundum artem*.

Now any man that reads this *Almighty-  
ship* and *Godship*, that Mr. Dryden from the  
Mouth of his familiar *Mercury* gives this  
*Jupiter*, would swear that the Majesty of  
the



the True God, was the least thought of in this *Amphytrion*, a God-ship that his own Pimp can wish at the Devil. Nay, though an *Omnipotent* power has been ascribed to *Jupiter* by the Heathen Theology, yet Mr. *Dryden* is so tender of offending any over curious Christian, that he purposely Burlesques his titular Attribute to this *Almightyship*, to take off all shadow of such Offence.

Besides, does not the Scripture over and over give the stile of *Gods* to all the *Heathen Idols*, though but *Stocks* and *Stones*; not that the Divine Inspiration in so expressing it in Holy Writ, could be supposed to give it as their due, any more than Mr. *Dryden* can be supposed to give *Jupiter* his *God-ship* as his due. And if from Mr. *Colliers* own Authority, the Perfections of God are himself, the same liberty that may give him his *Titular God-head*, may give him his *Titular Perfections* too.

However, as Mr. *Collier* sets up for a Play-house Scavenger, he's resolved to sweep cleanest where there's least Dirt. The Reader is to understand, that Mr. *Collier* is not so much angry at Mr. *Dryden's* choice of his Subject, as his *Mismanagement* of it: And upon that Quarrel, he spends his Artillery  
against



against him in four long Pages together;  
 and to mend all Mr. *Dryden's* Capital Faults  
 in his *Jupiter*. He tells us, " That *Plautus*  
 " was the only bold Heathen that brought  
 " *Jupiter* upon the Stage, he wrote upon  
 " the same unaccountable design ( his Adul-  
 " tery with *Alcmena* ; ) but *Plautus* his me-  
 " thods of persuite are very different ; his  
 " *Jupiter* does not solicit in scandalous Lan-  
 " guage, nor flourish upon his Lewdness,  
 " nor endeavours to set it up for the Fashi-  
 " on. *Plautus* had some Regard to the height  
 " of *Jupiter's* Character, and the Opinion  
 " of his Country, and the Restraints of  
 " Modesty, &c. As for the Greek Trage-  
 " diens, they mention *Jupiter* in terms of  
 " Magnificence and Respect, and make his  
 " Actions and his Nature all of a piece, &c.  
 " *Virgil's Jupiter* is always Great and Solemn,  
 " and keeps up the port of the Deity. 'Tis  
 " true, *Homer* does not Guard the Idea with  
 " that Exactness, but with all, never sinks the  
 " Character into Obscenity.

Well, and for not following these Elder  
 Sons of *Apollo*, in his Treatment of *Jupiter*,  
 Mr. *Dryden* stands irreparably Condemned :  
 And to have fenced against all Vengeances  
 hanging over his Head, he should have mo-  
 delled his Play by Mr. *Collier's* Plan, viz.  
 He should have had *Plautus* his regard to the  
 height



*height of Jupiter's Character, that is to say, given him every individual Attribute, and twice as many more as he has given him already; according to the Opinion of Plautus his Country, viz. with all the Adoration of the Heathens that Worshipped him for their true supreme God. In all the terms of Magnificence and Respect, with a Homage as great as if we were the true God of Heav'n in earnest, keeping up his whole port of a Deity, &c. pluming him with every Feather of his whole God-head.*

*This Jupiter thus Glorified, should set out to Court Amphytrion's Wife, viz. for a Nights Lodging, in no scandalous Language, in all the Softest Modestest Divine Courtship, no sinking his Character into Obscenity, all wrapt up so clean, his Actions and his Nature, the Adulterer and the God, all of a piece.*

*Good gracious Heaven, has not this Enthusiast the whole Zeal of an Oliver's Porter, and bids as fair to succeed him in his Moor-field Pallace? This is the Innocent, and Mr. Drydens the Blasphemous Amphytrion.*



How ingeniously Mr. Collier can out-blow the Satyr in the Fable! Mr. Dryden's *Amphytrion* is all a piece of Blasphemy for giving too much of the God to *Jupiter*, and has no way to mend that fault but by giving him *more* of it.

“ This Blasphemy of *Amphytrion*, nothing  
 “ but Mr. Dryden's *Absolon* and *Achitophel*  
 “ can out-doe, &c. Here we have Blasphemy  
 “ my on the top of the Letter without any  
 “ trouble of Inference or Construction. This  
 “ Poem runs upon all Scripture Names, upon  
 “ suppositions of the true Religion, and  
 “ object of Worship. Here are no Pagan  
 “ Divinities in the Scheme; so that all the  
 “ Atheistick Rallery must point upon the  
 “ true God. *Absalom* was *David's* natural Son;  
 “ so that there's a Blot in his *Scutcheon*,  
 “ and a Blemish upon his *Birth*. The Poet  
 “ will make admirable use of this Remark  
 “ presently. This *Absalom*, it seems, was  
 “ very extraordinary in his Person and performances;  
 “ Mr. Dryden does not certainly know how this came about, and therefore inquires of himself in the first place.

*Whither inspired by a Divinier Lust,  
 His Father got him with a greater Gust.*

“ This



“ This is down-right Defiance of the li-  
 “ ving God ! here you have the very Essence  
 “ and Spirit of Blasphemy, and the Holy  
 “ Ghost brought in upon the most hideous  
 “ occasion. I question whether the Tor-  
 “ ments and Despair of the Damn'd dare  
 “ venture at such Flights as these ; they are  
 “ beyond Description. I pray God they may  
 “ not be beyond Pardon too.

Now are here only two unhappy Words,  
 that blow the Bellows to all this Fire, *viz.*  
 [ Inspir'd ] and [ Diviner. ] Inspire, espec-  
 ially in the Verb, is so far from being only  
 appropriated to God, that scarce that Hu-  
 man Passion, Love, Joy, or what not, nay,  
 a meer start of Fancy, a sudden lucky thought,  
 but shall be said to inspire a Man.

Is this Gentleman, as sworn an Enemy to  
 all Poetry, as to the Dramatick, that he  
 willfully forgets, how the Poets upon all  
 occasions invoked their Muses to inspire  
 them. Nay, to go a little further, what  
 if the Devil himself has had his Inspirations  
 too, for as I take it, the old Heathen Ora-  
 cles were of his Inspiring. The Spirit of  
 False-hood, as well as Truth, has had the  
 Inspiring power, without intrenching upon  
 the Prerogative of God. And though [Di-



viner] is here made the Epithite to Lust, it makes not all to his purpose ; 'tis true the Expression favours a little too much of the Libertine ; yet I defie all the Sophistry of Malice it self to mount it up to Blasphemy, or to make it bear any tendency to that tremendous signification he has given it. For does not this Man of Letters know, that [Diviner,] though in the Comparative Degree, is here infinitely less then the positive [Diviner] only comparatively to the common Raptures of Lust. Had it been Written [*Inspired with a Divine Lust*] it might have given an overcurious Cynick some Umbrage for so profane a Construction, and yet even then too it would not have fully reacht the point, unless [*A Divine*] had been changed to the more emphatick [The Divine.]

But here as Mr. *Dryden* has worded it, and upon the subject he speaks it, if any thing of a Deity was either meant or thought of in this Inspiration, 'twas that of *Venus* : And indeed, what can the Genuine Sense of this poor Couplet honestly and fairly construed mean, than that his Father Inspired, or Animated with a Diviner or sublimer Lust, got him with that more then ordinary pleasure and transports, that possibly



sibly ( for 'tis not affirmatively said ) to that sprightlier Vivacity to the Generation of his *Abfalom*, that young Heir ( to continue his supposition ) might owe all those Personal Graces and Beauties, and all that innate Bravery, and the rest of the uncommon Accomplishments the Poet has occasion afterwards to give him.

Here I must beg my Reader's Pardon, that my honest Defense of Truth has forced me upon this unseemly Explanation ; I confess again, this Distick carries but a lew'd Idea along with it, but so far from a Blasphemy against the Great God, and so unpardonable, as he fancies it, that I doubt not but a profane Oath in his Name, is, of the two, the greater *Crimen læsæ Majestatis Dei*, and that upon a fair Tryal in a Court of Justice, the Mulct of two good Shillings, or as many Hours in the Stocks would be as much as our Law could well give against him.

Well, this Author has the least reason of Quarrelling with Mr. *Dryden's Fairy way of Writing* ; his way of *Commenting* is so far beyond it, that all his own *Fairys* are *Gyants*, whilst Mr. *Dryden* in this very Distick, is no less then leading up the old Host of *Lucifer*,



*fer*, and charging at the Throne of God himself. At this rate of Remarking, I dare not say, whither this Author be inspired by a *Puny* or a *full grown Sprite*; But this I must say, to come up to all the Heights of that Christian Champion, he professes himself, undoubtedly he must have a double Portion of Faith and Hope, to make up for his Diminutive Talent of Charity.

---

FINIS.

---



